A SOCIAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND

E. M. WILMOT-BUXTON

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FROM ANGLO-SAXON TIMES

FOR UPPER AND MIDDLE FORMS

BY

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INTRODUCTION

THERE are two methods of writing Social History for the young. The first and easier way is to chat pleasantly about the manners and dress of each period. The second is to describe certain lines of development which appear to have affected the community very closely, and to exclude others. This latter method involves the sacrifice of much picturesque detail, and lays the writer open to the charge of having omitted to deal with subjects that, for one reason or another, appeal especially to the individual critic.

But it seems to be the only way to account for certain modern conditions of no small importance, which cannot be fully understood till their history is known ; and this, one may believe, is the chief, if not the only, value of Social History as an educational subject.

For the reason given above, this book is planned so as to describe the historical growth of certain social developments according to the century or half century during which they became most prominent. This has involved some disregard of arbitrary limits, such as periods or reigns ; but from the time of the Conquest, at any rate, it has been found possible to deal more or less continuously with such movements as the growth of towns, of freedom from villeinage, of Tudor Nationalism ; the rise of the burgher, of the modern " middle class " and of the still more modern democracy, by describing their origin and development in the period when they are most in historical evidence.

The field is a vast one, and many subjects have not been dealt with at all. Yet the reader, who will look in vain for a complete description of the growth of the army and the navy, of the development of Parliament, is reminded that, though such matters are connected with Social History, they do not necessarily give young readers any clear conception of the kind of people who were concerned in them.

What seems of more importance, considering limitations of space, is to show how certain social changes, often almost unheeded at the time by those in authority, affected the outlook of the ordinary folk then living in this land, and to indicate the reasons for such changes.

For this purpose the subjects of real value would seem to be the Gilds, the Enclosures question, mediæval Labour conditions, the influence of Printing, the effect upon England of the Reformation, the rise of Universities, the migration from countryside to town, and the conditions that led to a wealthy middle class and a growing democracy.

Nowadays there is a clear call, which will probably grow more insistent, for a certain amount of Social Science teaching in our schools; and with it comes a feeling of uneasiness as to whether the study of economics will not prove a very dry morsel for immature intelligence to swallow. But when its dry bones are clothed with the most living kind of history, and closely connected both with the lives of our pupils and with the places with which they are most familiar, it can become one of the most fascinating of all studies.

Nothing more can be claimed for this book than an attempt to arouse interest in this subject and to afford the groundwork of future study, since much has been omitted or dealt with in brief and elementary fashion. But, given a fair knowledge of political history, a young

student should find enough in these pages to stimulate interest in the conditions under which he is living, although the book itself frankly deals far more fully with the Mediæval, Tudor, and Stuart conditions than with those of even the last century. For, as we approach the modern period, we still often cannot see the wood for the trees. Moreover, years of experience have convinced the writer that a multitude of details, such as is afforded by lists of inventions, manufactures, or minute conditions of Franchise Acts, is not only intensely boring, but almost useless from a mental point of view.

Therefore only such changes have been indicated as justify the names given to the Industrial Revolution, the Period of Reform, or the Growth of Democracy, without giving details of the spinning jenny, the phonograph, or the number of ships in the Navy at any given time.

An attempt has been made throughout the book to illustrate the story of the past by quotations from contemporary documents and literature; and the writer is the first to lament that limitations of space have prevented this being done more fully, since nothing shows so well the atmosphere of the period to which each belongs.

The exercises added to each chapter endeavour in most cases to link up conditions past and present, and may prove suggestive to young students who are interested in "human history."

At the end of each period is appended a list of books suggested for further study; to most, if not all, of which the writer of this short history owes a debt of warm gratitude.

E. M. W.-B.

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CONTENTS

A SOCIAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND

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CHAPTER I

THE WANDERING OF THE NATIONS

A.D. 450–550

IT has often been noticed how closely the life story of nations follows that of human beings in its development. In the early history of Europe we have a very good example of this fact. When a boy (or girl for that matter) is beginning to grow up he gets restless; the old life bores him, the old paths in which he has always trodden become too narrow. He longs for change, for adventure, for a wider outlook, and he gladly seizes the opportunity to go forth and make his own life.

So, in the centuries that followed the birth of Christ, when the Roman Empire was beginning to loosen her iron grip upon the outposts of her colonies, Europe awoke to the fact that she was no longer a child in leading-strings, that she was ready to go out and make her own countries and to settle where she willed.

Thus there began that restless movement that we call the Wandering of the Nations. We trace its progress, indistinctly at times, but unmistakable enough, in that earliest form of history book, the songs and poems sung and recited and handed down from one generation to another.

The nations moved in tribes, mainly towards the west and south, sometimes because they needed room for freer expansion, more fertile soil, new foes to conquer; sometimes from sheer love of movement and adventure. But

often they were forced to move westward by the growing pressure of the hordes of Huns advancing from the east, which, as in the days of Attila, destroyed all upon which they laid their hands.

"Full often," says one of their lays, "the whizzing shaft and felling spear flew from the tribes (about the Vistula) against the grim foes, seeking to avenge their warriors and their wives."[1]

The Wandering Tribes—Little by little some of these migratory tribes stand out by name, in connection with some hero chieftain of their race.

"Offa ruled the Angles, Alewih the Danes . . ., and though Alewih was of all men the proudest, yet over Offa he never proved a conqueror; and Offa, first among men, while yet a lad, won the greatest of the kingdoms. None at his age ever won greater renown. With his sword he extended his borders against the Myrgings; and from henceforth Angles and Swaefs held sway."

For a long time to come, however, these will be mere names; we shall have no clear idea of the characteristics of these nations nor of the limits of their territories. We see them all as barely civilized, their religion a vague nature-worship, filled with a dread of darkness and night, and dim, unknown regions peopled by them with witches and warlocks, monsters and watersprites. Their one clear faith was a trust in the sword and breastplate, the shield wall and the iron arrow; they slept with their weapons in their hands, and their highest office was the defence of their leader in the fight.

The Roman Obstruction—As these fierce tribes moved west and south during the third and fourth centuries of the Christian era, they presently found their way obstructed, if not altogether barred, by the legions of Rome. We have no clear mention of the latter in this early literature, though constant mention is made of the nomads by the Roman historians, who, as a rule, do not trouble to distinguish between them in any way, but call them all "Germans." The chief effect of the Roman ob-

[1] *Widsith.*

struction was to increase the pressure, and so to augment the restlessness and agitation of the wandering tribes, causing them to break through in one direction or another, or to turn their attention to lands hitherto unknown.

Influence of the Sea—Hence it came about that, at a period when the tribe rather than the family had developed as the centre of the social world of that age, some particularly enterprising hordes had settled to some extent in the lands lying about the rivers Elbe and Weser, as well as to the north of these, in the country we now call Denmark. Finding there a long sea border, they had learnt to build and to navigate their black boats, and in these they raced to and fro over the stormy seas, and became masters of what their minstrels love to call the " swan-path."

From the earliest dawn of their history the sea has always held a peculiar fascination for our forefathers. They may grumble at the hardships of a seafaring life, much as our sailors do nowadays, but of their own free will they return to it again and again.

"On the dark wave," says their *Seafarer*, "Care sighed hot about my heart, while Hunger within tore out the vitals of me, sea-weary." But though his hands may be numbed and frozen as he strives to keep the prow to the overwhelming waters, though his " feet are bound in icy fetters by the frost, and icicles hang about him, while the hail flies by in showers," yet he is nothing daunted. " Strong is the test to him who long explores the sea road," he boasts, and returns again to his battle with the deep in search of the walrus and whale and seal.

Invasion of Britain—Soon the narrow seas become but a bridge leading them to a land of new desire, for they have discovered an island known as Britain, an island whose green pastures, well-watered fields, and convenient coast-line opened up excellent prospects for a future dwelling-place.

At first a faint resistance is offered to their advance. A certain officer, known as the Count of the Saxon Shore, has been set by Roman overseers of past days to guard

the east and south-east coast against invasion. But his efforts avail nothing against the increasing number of the newcomers, and he has little support from the inhabitants themselves. For by this time the Britons, once so fierce and warlike in face of the Roman conqueror, have, under that conqueror's strict rule, grown tamer and more docile. They are torn, too, by quarrels among themselves, and by cruel attacks from foemen of the north and west, whom they call " Picts and Scots." They even welcome the rovers from across the North Sea at times, and make effort to enlist their help against these mysterious northerners ; but they soon find that, in a contest between wild beasts, the sheep stand sorry chance of safety ; and before the end of the fifth century these " fierce and impious whelps from the lair of the barbarian lioness, whom they dreaded more than death itself," [1] have made Britain, to a very large extent, their own.

In our earliest " Chronicles," written by monks long after the events took place, from information and tradition handed down from father to son, or gathered from the minstrel song and saga, we get a few scant records of the invasion. We hear how the Wealas—the Welshmen or foreigners, as the invaders called them—strenuously opposed the first onset of the barbarian chieftains in the year 455, but also how, two years later, they fled in terror from Kent and fell back on London. Later on, the " Welsh " fled the English " like fire," and Britain was devastated at the hands of the newcomers. One chronicler tells how the cunning foe proposed a truce and offered a banquet to the Britons, in which each guest sat between " Saxons." At a given signal knives were drawn and each hapless Briton was laid low. Others speak of massacres, starvation, wholesale surrender, the slaughter of the priest at the altar, the destruction of church and monastery, the cruel fate of such Roman cities as Bath and Chester.

Conquest of Britain—For by the middle of the sixth century the Saxon raiders had conquered the south and

[1] Gildas, *O.E. Chron.*

midlands, and were fast driving the Britons over the moorlands of Devon and the hills of the west into what we now call Cornwall and Wales. Bitter is the lament of one of their native poets for the " White Town " of Uriconium by the Wrekin.

> " The White Town between Treu and Trodwyd :
> More common was the broken shield coming from battle
> Than the ox at eventide. More common was the blood
> Upon the grass than the furrow made by the plough."

The pages of early English literature are full of descriptions of the way in which these forefathers of the English nation advanced in battle against those whom they set out to conquer. So large a place, indeed, is occupied by such details that we might almost be tempted to see in them nothing but a great tribal army always at war and knowing no life but that of the camp. We hear the responsive shout of the " barons " and " thegns " as their leader, raising his shield aloft, bids them bear themselves well in the fight. We hear the clash of shields, as they lock together to form a wall of defence, the rattle of the iron-tipped arrow or the flung javelin, the rip of cloven helmet or chain armour, the crash of the battle-axe, the thud of horses' hoofs as the vanquished flee from the field. And always in grim, poetic vein the chronicler reminds us of the raven, " dewy-nebbed "—or, as we should say, with watering mouth—awaiting his prey, " singing a grisly war-song," while the grey wolf lurks on the outskirts of the field.

No doubt it was in these years of warfare, of treachery, of bloodshed that the seeds were sown of finer things—the seeds of patriotism, of self-sacrifice, of loyalty to one's overlord, of discipline and self-control. But had there been no other side to their existence, we might well think of our forefathers as merely a race of bloodthirsty savages, and marvel that, within one hundred and fifty years after the beginnings of invasion, we find an England very fairly settled, open to civilizing influences, and ready to listen to the message of Christianity which was to bring actual civilization in its track.

Exercises

1. Give some causes of the invasion of Britain. Compare them with the motives and causes of Emigration in modern times.

2. Where do you know of traces of British, Roman, and Saxon remains in this land?

CHAPTER II

THE BEGINNINGS OF SETTLEMENT

A.D. 550–650

IF we want a true picture of the social life of our English forefathers, we may find it in a poem composed before the latter ever set foot in Britain. For, although they were influenced by their new surroundings, the invaders, to a very great extent, brought their manners and customs with them; and so the story of *Beowulf*, the tribal hero of the Continental Saxon, is also the story of our earliest England.

Social Life in Early England—Here we find painted for us the Hall of the Chieftain, where dwell, in personal attendance upon their lord, his "thegns," or hearth-companions, veterans, and youths who had yet to prove their valour. Their duty is to defend their lord and his family at all times of need, and in return he, the Ring-Giver, as they love to call him, rewards them with "treasure"—a ring or bracelet of red gold, a well-tried sword, a horse, or even a daughter of the chieftain race.

The tie between chieftain and thegn of noble blood was very strong. Their lord endures "thegn-sorrow" at their loss, sits glum and sorrowful by the desolate hearth when the dragon Grendel has torn them from the Hall. The thegn, on the other hand, shows absolute devotion to his chief, is his "shoulder companion" in the fight, his adviser and counsellor at home. In a time of sore stress, when Beowulf is nigh to death before the onslaught of the dragon, one of his young thegns reminds his companion how at mead-time, in the beer-hall, they promised their lord and ring-giver that one day they would well requite those helmets and sharp swords that he had given them.

How he had reminded them of honour and gave them treasure because he accounted them brave warriors. "Let us go then to his help. I would prefer to perish with him than to bear back our shields in safety." So he goes alone to his lord's help, and with him slays the dragon, though he cannot save the chieftain's life. "Hardly went it with that young warrior when he saw his best beloved at the end of life, in the death-struggle."

And yet another poem, *The Wanderer*, suggests a moving picture of past joy. "He recalls then in his memory how he his lord did clip and kiss, and on his knee laid down both hands and head, as when in days of old he received precious gifts from his ring-giver."

Next in rank we find the "ceorl," or freeman, not of noble origin, but classed as a warrior of the tribe from the time he was old enough to quit himself like a man. He had the right of appearing, armed and on horseback, at the tribal council called by the chieftain, where he might show his approval by clashing his spear on his shield, or his disapproval by placing his lips to the edge of his buckler and giving a hum of dissent. He was "free" in the sense that he could neither be imprisoned nor beaten nor put to death. If he were killed his relatives could claim "wer-geld"—the price of his blood. But if he committed a crime he could be outlawed, became a "wolf-head," was driven out to the woods, and could be hanged upon the nearest tree by anyone who chose to capture him.

The lowest grade of social order was that of the "theows," the serfs or thralls, who were generally drawn from the conquered race, and became the servants of the community. But sometimes we find among them freemen who had lost their freedom for theft and been sold with all their households into slavery.

Old English Settlements—The first actual settlements made by our forefathers grew up, naturally enough, out of the camp or the mead-hall. Scarcely ever do we find them taking over the devastated towns of the British, with their marks of Roman civilization plain upon them.

The newcomer looked askance at the villa with its bath, its hot-water spring, its floor of mosaic, at the strong stone walls which enclosed the town in which it stood, at the stone-paved roads connecting one city with another. A house of stone was to him a prison, and he turned away from such buildings to the more familiar woods and forests, where he found both the material and the locality he desired. With his axe he made a clearing, with the felled trees he built his tent.

The land thus cleared was "folc-land," and was divided up by the chieftain among the freemen of the tribe to be held for life only. But to the thegn who had done some especially honourable service to his lord was granted "boc-land," or "freehold," secured in later days by "book" or charter, and held by him and his heirs for ever. The Hall of the Chieftain, at first the centre of the camp, soon became the point round which clustered the wooden huts of his eorls, barons, and thegns, with "bowers" for the women and sheds in which slept the thralls or slaves. The Hall, as we see it in the pages of *Beowulf*, is long and high-roofed, with an entrance at both ends, a hearth in the middle, the smoke from which escaped through a hole in the roof above, and long benches on either side. A raised platform for the chieftain, a long table for the mead-cups are the only other furniture, save for the war weapons and trophies which hang from the rough-hewn walls.

The whole enclosure, surrounded by a mound and a ditch, was called a *tûn*, and was the rude origin of our modern township. It was guarded by armed watchmen, who looked with keen suspicion at the approach of any stranger.

"If any unknown man leave the beaten path," says a code of early laws,[1] "without making his presence known by shouting or blowing his horn, he is liable to be taken as a thief and either slain or sold."

Beyond the *tûn* lay the "mark-land," an unknown, unexplored tract of wood or marsh-land, peopled by the imaginative English with demons and dragons, water-

[1] *Laws of Ine.*

sprites and witches. In *Beowulf*, whose scenery may well be that of an early northern England, it is described as "a secret land, wolf-haunted slopes and windblown peaks, a dangerous fen-path . . .," whose mere, overhung with rustling groves, is full of strange portents—"fire on the flood . . . even the stag, hard pressed by hounds, will rather give up his life on the shore than venture in to hide his head."

From such grim scenes the warriors hastened gladly to the cheerful life within the *tûn*. In fine weather they would spend the days of peace in hunting, fishing, riding, or hawking; but when the dark days and long nights of winter were upon them they had other amusements. They were fond of playing a game involving the use of dice and a chequered board, they sang rough songs of warfare, they loved to listen to the harp and the saga of the minstrel, and they certainly spent much time in drinking and in sleep.

They were hospitable too, and rejoiced in the presence of a noble guest. On Beowulf's arrival at Hrothgar's Hall of Heorot, he is given glad welcome, though he is obliged to observe the time-honoured rule that bids a guest lay aside spear and shield before entrance. The warriors throng the benches, and the thegn, whose duty it is to bear the fretted mead-vessel, pours out the foaming ale. They drink and pledge one another, while at intervals the *scop*, the "shaper" of songs or poet minstrel, sings a song, recounting the deeds of heroes.

Then upon the scene appears the Lady of Heorot, wife of Hrothgar, who first carries a golden cup to the chieftain; then, when he has touched it with his lips, to each "eorl" and thegn in the hall; and lastly, as custom bade, to Beowulf, the guest of her lord. Then she takes her seat beside Hrothgar, and the banquet proceeds till dusk. At another banquet, given when Beowulf has killed the fen monster Grendel, we have a great giving of gifts. A banner of gold, another richly ornamented, a jewelled sword and armour, and horses with gold inlaid bridles, Hrothgar's own war-horse, with saddle wrought with precious stones, are given to the victor. To the sound of

the harp rises the battle-song, and with great ceremony the banquet proceeds undisturbed to its close, unless, perchance, overcome by the heady liquor, the warriors take to boasting and thence to strife.

This was the life of our forefathers in those early days of settlement, a life so dear to them that an exile laments in heartbroken wise[1]: "The memory of kinsmen passes into my heart: I greet them with joy, but they fade away: the spirit of the fleeting shadows brings no more the old familiar songs. All round this land the walls stand wind-beaten and frost-bitten, and halls are all decayed. The wine-hall crumbles, its lord lies lifeless, its warriors are fallen by the wall. Where is the steed? Where the treasure-giver? Where are the benches for the feast? Where the joys of the mead-hall now?" This love of home and its simple joys was connected closely with the influence of the women of the race. And here we may notice an interesting point which accounts for the undoubted mixture of Celtic or British strain in the future race of English people.

Celtic Influence—In those early invasions, when Britain had yet to be conquered, the newcomers certainly did not bring their women-folk with them in their crowded war vessels. In later days the nobles probably brought across wives and kinswomen and brides given in settlement of feuds or alliances. But in the great majority of cases the invaders took wives to themselves of the British race, princesses or maids of low degree according to their rank. And that is why in their children even to the present day we find that strain of Celtic romance, mysticism, and love of beauty for its own sake, that sense of the hidden "tears of things" mingled with keen joy in life, running through the sturdy warrior spirit and love of material things that marked the Anglo-Saxon breed.

Position of Women—In this early literature we find a high place given to the Lady of the House, the "loaf-giver," or "peace-weaver," as she is lovingly called. In

[1] *The Wanderer.*

Beowulf she gently admonishes her guest that in Heorot is "every earl true to his fellow, mild of heart." A proud princess who had enacted that any man who looked upon her beauty should lose his life is held worthy of blame. "Such is not a queen-like custom for a woman that a peace-weaver should deprive a man of his life." The fact that a bride was bought from her kinsmen with money or cattle no more made her a "chattel" than the dowry of the present day. We read that a king "must buy his queen with cattle, with cups and bracelets. The earl must grow strong in war and the wife in the love of her people. She must be wise and gay, generous in treasure-giving, and in the mead-hall always must she greet the chief of the princes first of all, giving straightway the first cup to the hand of her lord. And they together, being householders, must take counsel."[1]

Another tiny picture of the home life of the race stands out in the lines which describe the return of the sailor to his wife: "Dear is the welcome when the ship runs inshore, his boat is come and her man is home, her own true food-giver. She bids him enter, washes his wave-stained suit, gives him fresh clothing. Pleasant is it for him on land when love drives him to his own hearthstone."

Old English Laws—As the settlement became accomplished and the chieftain developed into the king, we find the beginnings of a primitive code of law. Such are the *Laws of Ine*, King of Wessex, in the early part of the eighth century, of which the following throw light upon certain features of this social side of life:

"If any man fight in the king's house, he must atone for it with all his possessions, and it is according to the king's will as to whether he loses his life or not.

"If any man fight in a monastery, he must pay a fine of 120s.

"If in the house of a nobleman (*ealdorman*) or any other distinguished person, he must atone for it by paying 60s., and another 60s. as a fine to the king.

[1] *Gnomic Verses.*

" If in the house of a taxpayer (tenant) or a farmer, he must pay 30s. as a fine to the king, and 6s. to the freeholder.

" And even if he fight in the fields, he must pay 30s. for a fine to the king."

Ranks of Society—In these distinctions we have a good example of the different ranks of society before the Conquest ; and this is made still clearer by the " wer-geld," or scale of money due to the relatives of a slain man by him who slew him. In a tenth-century document the title of each grade is slightly different, and the order runs thus :

King.
Archbishop.
Bishop and earl (*ealdorman*).
King's reeve, or officer.
Mass-thegn (priest).
Secular thegn.
Ceorl.

Thegns would correspond roughly to the modern tax-paying tenant class, and these were of two kinds. " King's thegns " are " such as stand in immediate relationship to him," and are liable to pay him as " heriot " four horses, two of them saddled, two swords, four spears and shields, a helmet and coat of mail, and a sum of gold. These were under the authority of the king alone. The lower class pay a horse and its saddle and a set of arms, and are subject to other persons of authority.

The thegn might inherit his rank ; on the other hand, if a ceorl has amassed wealth to the extent of five hides of land, built a church, a kitchen, a belfry, or a castle-gate, and owns a seat in the hall of the king, he takes rank with a thegn forthwith, though not necessarily becoming one.

A merchant, moreover, who had three times crossed the open sea at his own expense, also ranks with a thegn.

Then come laws dealing with other forms of transgression :

" If any man steal and his wife and children know not

of it, he must pay a fine to the king of 60s. If he steal with the knowledge of his family, let them all be sold into slavery. A ten-year-old boy may be an accomplice of theft."

" If a stranger or foreigner go off the footpath through a wood and neither shouts nor blows his horn, let him be taken for a thief and either slain or put to ransom."

" If a man burn down a tree in a wood and it become known, he must pay the full fine ; he must pay 60s. For fire is a thief."

" If a man cut down quite a number of trees and is afterwards discovered, he must pay for three trees, 30s. each. Nor need he pay more, however many trees there were ; for the axe is an informer, not a thief."

Exercises

1. What points strike you as most interesting in Old English Laws ?
2. What do you gather of the position of women in Old English days ?
3. Describe or draw a picture of an Old English Hall.

CHAPTER III

DEVELOPMENT OF CIVILIZATION

A.D. 600–800

DURING the century that followed the period of conquest, certain changes in the social life and character of these Early English settlers began to develope. Since they need no longer fight for bare existence, their character became less that of the warrior, more that of the yeoman or farmer. As they moved inland, away from the coast-line, their interests were no longer sea-bound, but were drawn to the need of clearing land overgrown with forest or of cultivating the soil. Moreover, they began to lose touch almost entirely with the continent from which they came, except on the rare occasions of noble visitors or of marriage with a bride from overseas. Thus they became narrower, more local in their interests. These causes, acting together, presently brought about a loss of tribal instinct and an increase of what we may call the " parochial " spirit.

When settlements became permanently fixed round the mead-hall of the petty king, when granaries were built and temples raised to Woden or Thor in their midst, the Englishman lost his roving spirit and preferred an abiding place for himself and his family for his own lifetime and that of his descendants. And thus was prepared the way for a wave of civilization that, at the very end of the sixth century, was to flow over this Early England through the channel of the Christian Church.

Early English Religion—Those Early English poems to which reference has so often been made in these pages are marked here and there with Christian ideas and aspirations ; but these are due to the editing of Christian

scribes, in their efforts to baptize a heathen literature. For these English settlers were frankly heathen, untouched by the faith that was fast spreading over Europe. Their insular position was bound to delay their conversion, and their beliefs remained those of their northern ancestors for more than a century after their arrival.

Their religion was simple enough, and full of romantic features. They believed in Asgard, Hall of the Gods, where Woden ruled, and whither possibly wended the souls of dead heroes, though there was much vagueness as to this future state. We find them laying the body of their chieftain on a ship laden with treasure and armour and weapons, and sending him forth with a banner above his head to the bosom of the great deep. None could say what was the fate of that quiet form, nor that of the soul which had given it life.

In the same way they believed that the ancestor of their race floated ashore from the ocean as an unknown babe; and thus "from the great deep to the great deep he goes."

Sometimes such dead heroes themselves became gods to their descendants, but more frequently we find them worshipping some manifestation of Nature such as Thor, the Thunder-god, or Freya, who makes the corn grow, or the Moon Goddess, or Eostra, goddess of the dawn. Loki, the serpent who is coiled round Midgard, the Earth, is to them the representation of evil; but to them also the earth is full of wicked spirits, whose power must be warded off by incantations and charms. Here is one of such charms used by a woodman who has just doubled up with a stitch in the side. His fellows gather round him, and while one holds a wooden shield, as though to guard him from darts shot from the air, the others sing:

"Loud were they, lo, loud, as over the land they rode;
Fierce of heart were they as over the hill they rode.
Shield thee now thyself: from this spite thou mayst escape thee!
Out, little spear, if herein thou be!
Underneath the linden stood he, underneath the shining shield,
While the mighty women mustered up their strength;
And the spears they sent screaming through the air!
Back again to them will I send another

Arrow forth a-flying from the front against them;
Out little spear, if herein thou be!

. . . . . .

If it were the shot of Esa, or if it were of elves the shot,
Or if it were of hags the shot; help I bring to thee,
Flee witch, to the wild hill-top,
But thou—be thou hale, and help thee the Lord."[1]

Over all their beliefs broods the dark form of the goddess *Wyrd* or Fate, who "hurries men blindly on along the path she marks for them," and rules the affairs of men.

That these beliefs were far from satisfying the mind of the average Englishman of the seventh century is seen by the declaration of that thegn of Edwin of Northumbria, who about the year 627 is heard to say:

"The present life of man, O King, in comparison with the time unknown to us is as if, at a banquet, when the fire is kindled and thy thegns sit round it, a sparrow should fly swiftly through the hall from one door and depart by the other. From the winter out into the winter again it passes. Such, O King, is our mortal life. What has gone before, what shall follow after, who shall tell?"

Influence of Christianity—It was Saint Augustine who, in the year 597, first brought to Kent the answer to this question. The Celtic Church of Wales, it is true, had never entirely lost the faith brought by their first conquerors, by missionaries among the legions of Rome. But the faith of a conquered people, even had it been a more definite form of Christianity than that of the British Church, would never have appealed to a race that was accustomed to worship the Storm God Woden, or Thor the Thunderer. The message of Augustine came, on the other hand, from an Empire which commanded the respect and admiration of Ethelbert, King of Kent, who knew by experience the difficulties of asserting even a qualified kind of lordship over England as far as the Humber banks. He knew no more of the real weakness of the fallen Roman Empire, already absorbed by barbarian rulers, than he did of the rapidly growing power of the Catholic Church within her borders. But the message,

[1] Translation by the late Rev. Stopford Brooke.

though strange and disquieting, with its news of a patient and suffering Saviour of mankind in place of a violent, all-powerful, and unmerciful god of battles, came from a quarter that demanded a deferential hearing, and in course of time Ethelbert was baptized in the Church of St Martin at Canterbury.

The story of the conversion of the seven provinces into which the England of those days was roughly divided is too detailed to be told here. We must read elsewhere of how Paulinus, following in the wake of his royal mistress, converted Edwin of Northumbria, and made Cefi, the heathen priest, the destroyer of heathen temples in that land; of how Penda of Mercia, the persecutor of the faith, became, not a Christian, but an unmerciful critic of those who called themselves the followers of the Crucified without obeying His commands; of Cuthbert and Wilfred, and all those noble names of men who taught the faith first in this English land.

Method of Conversion—But the method of conversion to Christianity and its very marked effects belong in a special manner to the social history of this time. It was no easy matter to wipe out the religion of a race when that religion was deeply rooted in the primary instincts of the people; and Gregory the Great, then Pope of the Universal Church, was wise enough to insist on a compromise. The Church was patient with all sincere beliefs, but such beliefs must be Christianized in form. Recognizing the truth of their complaint, "They have taken away the ancient worship and no one knows how the new worship is to be performed," he ordained that the heathen temples should be consecrated, not destroyed; that their sacrifices should not be forbidden, but made to the one true God; that they should be won gently to a knowledge of Christ, not driven in anger from their nature worship and their crowded Asgard. Even their feast days, their ceremonies at mid-summer and harvest and Easter, were not rejected, but were connected with some feast of the Church. And thus we still find traces of the mid-summer fires on the Eve of St John, of the

mistletoe on Christmas Eve, the boar's head and Yule log, and of the special significance of the Mass said at the Aurora of Christmas, and at the break of Easter Day, when the festival of the Goddess of the Dawn merged into the Feast of the Risen Christ.

Effects of Conversion—The effects of even a partial conversion to Christianity were very marked. For the first time England was brought into direct touch with the organization of the ancient Roman Empire and began to share in those features of its rule which the Christian Church had made her own. Where they had been content with a rough code of tribal morality, the English now found the advantage of a legal system both civil and ecclesiastical. In place of separate provinces, each warring more or less against the other, the land was divided up into dioceses by Theodore of Tarsus, each ruled by a bishop who looked to Rome for authority. Thus for the first time the idea of unity and centralization arrived in England, and kings and bishops were glad to work hand in hand. Before the end of the seventh century English nobles and English kings, such as Cadwalla and Ine of Wessex and Offa of Mercia, made the toilsome journey to Rome, and set the fashion for pilgrimages which, if they sometimes led rather to worldly than to heavenly joys, must at any rate have brought the travellers into very close connection with the wider life of Europe.

In other ways the effect of the new faith profoundly influenced the character of the nation. A born fighter was the Englishman still, but he no longer won praise for unnecessary violence and slaughter. Charity and mercy became new virtues as distinct from the older code of hospitality. "In the days of Edwin," we read, "so great was the peace that a woman with a child at her breast might pass from sea to sea without hurt." That same Edwin, King of Northumbria, would have cups of brass hung upon posts by wayside springs for the use of travellers; King Oswald broke his dishes of gold and silver to distribute the pieces to the poor at his gates.

Laws are drawn up for the protection of thralls or *theows*. These must not be wantonly beaten or ill-used, nor deprived of their savings; and later on we find the *Laws of Alfred* decreeing that after seven years of faithful service the slave should be given his freedom at the cross-roads.

The position of women, never a degraded one among our forefathers, rose to one of high honour when such women as Hilda of Whitby ruled a great double monastery, with monks on one side, nuns on the other, and when kings and bishops sought counsel from her lips. But perhaps the most important gift brought by the Christian missionary was that of education.

Education—In the Europe of those days the monks of the Order of St Benedict were opening schools for the instruction, not only of their own novices, but of all lads of a studious turn of mind.

In England such monasteries soon flourished exceedingly. At Canterbury St Augustine had founded a college for the study of Latin which became the parent of the "Schools" of Kent and East Anglia, and soon vied in popularity with that of Malmesbury and Glastonbury, and was only overshadowed in future days by that of York.

Alcuin, the great English scholar of the days of Egbert, describes the daily routine in the monastic "university" of York—how the bishop schoolmaster teaches his boys all the morning, instructing them in Latin, especially in the study of Virgil, Ovid, and Cicero, in Roman law, in Greek, in astronomy and music, and most of all in theology. At noon the bishop celebrates the chief Mass of the day, after which comes dinner and recreation, when literary questions are put and discussed. Then after due exercise comes further study, such as the "nature of man, of cattle, birds, and beasts," and of the properties of numbers. After vespers the students kneel to receive the bishop's blessing at the ending of the day.

Through the industry of such men as these England became famous for her libraries. Valuable manuscripts were brought from a Europe that was fast ceasing to

realize their worth, careful copies were made by skilled penmen; the library of York was second only to that of Rome in importance. When teaching the sons of the Emperor Charlemagne in the early years of the ninth century, Alcuin begs that he may send to his own country "youths who may obtain thence necessary books, and so bring into France the flowers of Britain, that the garden of Paradise be no more confined to York."

The outer husk of such books was scarcely less precious than the kernel. The most beautiful materials, studded with jewels and ornamented with gold, was not too precious to be used in bookbinding; the richest colours and most patient workmanship adorned the capitals of the pages within. A collection of such books was literally worth its weight in gold.

International Interests—Stone churches, the outward sign of a permanent faith, began to be built during the eighth century, traces of which may be found at Canterbury, at Ripon, Hexham, Wearmouth, and Crowland.

At Jarrow, in his quiet cell, the Venerable Bede was writing a history of the Church that was to remain the chief authority for the history of those days, even to the present time. From York, as we have seen, Alcuin was chosen to be the tutor of the sons of Charlemagne, most enlightened of Emperors of that day. From Crediton, then the seat of a western bishopric, Winfrid or Boniface went forth to carry the Gospel message to the Saxons and Franks of the Continent. On the other hand we find the Northumbrian Benedict Biscop searching Gaul and Rome herself for builders and glass-workers, for pictures and wall paintings to adorn his church at Wearmouth, and afterwards at Jarrow, and thus to teach his people by eye as well as ear the mysteries of the Faith.

Best known of all, from the unlearned lay brothers who tend the cattle of the monastery at Whitby, comes Cædmon, first native poet of English soil, who, by a God-given gift, turns whatever "holy stories" are told to him "into sweetest song." "Meditating and ruminating like a clean animal," says Bede, "he sang of the creation

of the world and of many other things, since he had received freely the gift of singing."

Exercises

1. Show in what ways England was connected with the Continent in these days.
2. What do you find interesting in the education of this period?
3. What were some of the effects of the conversion of England to Christianity?

CHAPTER IV

THE FURY OF THE NORTHMEN

A.D. 800–1000

IT was upon an England such as this—prosperous, beginning to be famous for its literature, its learning, and its standard of civilization—that there suddenly descended the avalanche of the Danish Invasion. "From the fury of the Northmen, Good Lord, deliver us," ran a clause in the Litany of that day, and well might that be the prayer of every Englishman. For a hundred years at least, during the whole period covered by the ninth century, the land was subject to a series of terrible onslaughts. "In the year 787," says the *Chronicle*, "their ships came first in the days of King Beorhtric, and the reeve rode to them and wanted to make them go with him to the King's 'tun,' for he knew not what they were. And they slew him."

Such is the brief notice of the first appearance of the Vikings as raiders, and within the next ten years Northumbria, already weakened by her long and vain struggle for supremacy against Mercia and Wessex, was laid completely waste. "Whither march ye, ye noble chieftains? The Danes have descended upon the North. They have burnt your halls, they are carrying off your wealth, they are tossing your young children aloft on the point of their spears; they carry away your wives into slavery." "And both kings and people, in bewilderment, lost their vigour of mind and body and were utterly prostrated."

This is the contemporary picture painted for us, though it scarcely does justice to the efforts of the English to repel the invader. But the latter held the advantage in that, even if vanquished, he had but to take to his boats

and flee away with his stolen goods, only to return at a more favourable opportunity.

The Northmen as Conquerors—By the middle of the ninth century the Northmen were coming into this land not as raiders, but as conquerors. Every summer the "Great Horde," as the English called the Danish army, in distinction to their own national levy, the "fyrd," had made its landing, and harried the country far and wide. But now it wintered there as well, while three hundred and fifty "long ships" of war lay in the mouth of the Thames, keeping ward over London. The north and east, weak with internal faction and knowing nothing of unity with the south, had become an easy prey, and for the next two hundred years the influence of Scandinavia was to be the predominant feature there, just as it had become already in Northern France about Rouen, the City of Rou or Rolf the Ganger. The most terrible feature here was the loss of the monasteries, with their treasures of learning and books. "They slew the abbot and the monks (of Peterborough), and all that they found there, which before was very rich, they made so that it became nothing."

In vain are they opposed by such heroic rulers as Edmund of East Anglia, who, when pressed to fly for his life, replies: "'Tis not my wont to flee, and I would rather die, if need be, for mine own land." And again, when the heathen invaders offer him life and safety if he will give up land and treasure, he answers boldly: "Never will Edmund bend to the heathen chieftain, except he first bend with faith to the Saviour," and so goes forth to meet his death at their hands.

The Reforms of Alfred—Only in a small portion of Wessex did the invaders meet with efficient opposition, and that from "a little band," well trained and very mobile, led by that prince who was to be known as the "darling of the English." Again and again Wessex is overrun by the Dane, but Alfred stands his ground, now here, now there, until in 878 the camp of Guthrum is

suddenly seized, hostages are given, and within a fortnight the chieftain is baptized, and Alfred stands sponsor to his former foe.

At once he set to work to defend the country against fresh attacks. By a simple and common-sense arrangement he remedied the dislocation caused by a system of universal conscription by keeping half his *fyrd* at home and the other half in the field by turns.

Realizing the immense advantage given by the Danish navy, he designed a fleet of ships "nearly twice as long, but swifter, steadier, and higher" than those of the invader. As a consequence we read in the *Chronicle* of a fight off the coast of Wessex with six Danish warships, in which two are captured and one escaped with the loss of nearly all the crew. The other three, which had run aground, were then attacked in a brief but fierce conflict, and two of them, when floated off by the rising tide, were again forced aground on the Sussex shore and captured.

This is our first record of a naval battle, the precursor of the fight with the Armada, of St Vincent and Trafalgar, and Jutland.

Next Alfred turned his mind to the sorry condition inland, where laws and morals had been well-nigh forgotten in the long conflict with barbarism.

The code of laws that bears his name is a revival of that of Ine, but is based more explicitly upon the precepts of the Ten Commandments and their amplification in the Christian Gospels. He did not claim originality in their expression. "I, Alfred, King, gathered them together," he says modestly, "venturing not to set down much of mine own, for I knew not what of it would please those who come after us."

His code was the beginning of better things, and, though he ruled only a part of a hopelessly divided land, this reign of Alfred shows a marked improvement in social conditions. Scholar as well as warrior, he laid aside the sword only to take up the pen and to make provision for a return of some semblance of learning to the devastated country.

He tells us in the preface to one of his books that, when he first came to look into the state of things, he found scarcely one of his priests able to translate the Latin of his "Mass-book." Forthwith he set to work to make translations, not only of prayer-books, but of such collections of information as he found in the pages of Boethius, the mediæval "bookmaker," who discourses so delightfully upon most subjects under the sun. Sometimes he gives us original accounts of such events as the visit of the explorers, Othere and Wulfstan, who bring to an incredulous king, as proof of their adventures, a long white walrus tooth.

Under his encouragement education began once more to flourish in England among the few who had "leisure and means to apply themselves to it."

In the days of his son Edward the Elder, and of his daughter Ethelfleda, Lady of the Mercians, Dane and Englishman began to settle down side by side in peace. Battles there still were, such as that at Brunanburh, where "Athelstan, king, lord of earls, and his brother Edmund the Atheling, life-long glory won in the fight with edges of sword . . . when they clove the shield wall, cut down the leaden shields with the bloodstained sword—those sons of Edward." But the general trend is towards the peace of the days of Edgar (973–975), whom "kings honoured far and wide, and submitted to him as was fitting."

Effect of Viking Invasion—Yet the coming of the Vikings, devastating shock as it would at first appear, was on the whole of advantage rather than otherwise as far as social history is concerned.

It led, as we have seen, to a wide scheme of "reconstruction" as regards the army, the navy, law, and education. But most important of all, perhaps, it brought back to England that spirit of enterprise, of energy, and hardness that it was beginning to lose. Not without loss was the Latin civilization imposed from without upon a people alien in race, language, and instinct; and the Danish blight came to check a premature and possibly

unnatural growth in this respect. We have seen some tokens of revival in the impulse towards exploration, as shown in the spirited stories of Othere and Wulfstan, who had " dwelt to the northward further north than any man," and became famous explorers, as well as hunters of the walrus and the seal.

The Danish influence brought with it, on the other hand, a reaction towards fierce ideals on the part of the rulers and a heedlessness of morals even among the teachers of the people that needed the strong and ruthless hand of one such as Archbishop Dunstan to reform. His was the battle of the regular monks, with their strict ascetic rule, against the secular clergy with their lower standard; and as Archbishop of Canterbury under Edgar he succeeded in building many new monasteries and in filling them with " shepherds of a holier race " than the " illiterate clergy, subject to the discipline of no regular order."

Throughout the long contest sounds a note of dread. The *Chronicle* makes it clear that the greater part of the people expected the end of the world to occur in the year 1000 A.D., and preferred to build houses of wood rather than stone because of the lack of permanence in human life. As the tenth century drew to its close there died with it something of the old brave spirit that flares up for almost the last time in the battle-song of Maldon, in the year 991, when the Vikings reappear in the guise of victors demanding tribute. The first half of the eleventh century is darkened by the treachery and weakness of Ethelred the Unwise before the foe. Never now do we hear of heroic fights, " for the army, destitute of a leader and ignorant of military affairs, either retreated before it came into action or else was easily overcome."

And now the hated " dane-geld " is levied regularly each year upon a people burdened and oppressed and forced to silence. Yet strangely enough it was under a Danish king, Canute, greatest of Vikings, that a large measure of peace and security returned to the tortured land. " I have never spared nor will I spare either

myself or my pains for the necessary service of my whole people," writes from Rome this king, under whom England became more nearly English than she had yet been, in the brief breathing space that was to be hers before the coming of the Norman.

Organization of England—Before we leave this period, we must glance briefly at the organization of government, such as it was, before the more definite introduction of a " system " under Norman rule.

The Anglo-Saxon " witan " was a purely advisory council, consisting solely of the king's friends and supporters, though in theory every freeman had a right to sit upon it. We find it called by Edwin of Northumbria to decide as to the acceptance of a new faith at the beginning of this period, and again at the end to consult as to the succession to the throne on Edward the Confessor's death. But there is very little evidence that it had any kind of elective power or any marked influence over the people as a whole.

Actual administration of justice was maintained in the courts of the shire or the hundred, the details of which hardly belong here. More closely connected with the social history of the time are the " Frith Gilds," confraternities for the purpose of maintaining peace and good behaviour. In these it was the duty of each " brother " to act as a kind of informal policeman. He was bound to avenge an injury done on any other member, and also to furnish a fixed yearly sum, which paid the fines exacted from members, helped the poor and sick, and procured Masses for their souls after death.

In those days the population of England was almost entirely agricultural, and there were no towns in the land. The Anglo-Saxon, indeed, still looked on walled settlements with suspicion, and the English " burh " was a hamlet with a number of wooden thatched huts, a " hall " for the baron, a little church, all enclosed within a low mound and a moat. The serfs and labourers (ceorls) were bound to their lord by certain laws of service. They must reap, plough, sow for him, or pay their plough penny or

" repp-silver." Sometimes the larger " burhs " combined money and labour dues, and we find Oxford paying £20 and six measures of honey, and Dunwich £50 and 60,000 herrings.

The chief industry, apart from agriculture, was fishing—mostly in the rivers, though " sea-swine "—porpoises—are mentioned; and we also find workers in salt, glass, gold, and silver.

The monasteries were the chief industrial centres, since every priest was bound by rule to learn and practise a handicraft.

The trade and industry of the country in the year before the Conquest was mostly in the hands of the seafaring Danes, whose settlements can be traced along the north-east coast by the place-name terminations of -ness and -by. But a letter of Charles the Great to Offa of Mercia speaks of " English " traders among the bands of pilgrims, who are travelling with a safe " pass " to Rome, and references are found to their gold and silver work. The enterprise of Othere and Wulfstan, the northern explorers, has been already mentioned; and after the building of Alfred's fleet, we find mention in the records of port dues of a lively trade with Normandy, France, and Flanders.

A dialogue of Aelfric Bata, written in the late tenth century, makes the merchant talk of his silks, gems, dyes, and dyed stuffs, wine, oil, ivory, sulphur, and glass, which he buys cheaply in the East and sells " dearly " in this land. And we know that Cornish tin and lead, even silver and gold, horses and wool were exported, and also slaves, till this was prohibited by Ine's law, " That Christian men and uncondemned be not sold out of this country."

Exercises

1. Consider carefully the effects of the invasion of the Northmen on England.
2. What are the claims of Alfred to the title of The Great?
3. What modern connections can you trace between England and Scandinavia.

SOME BOOKS TO BE CONSULTED OR READ

The story of Beowulf and several translations of Old English poems, charms, and stories in *Britain Long Ago*. (E. M. Wilmot Buxton.)
National Life and Character, 650–1400. (Dale.)
Studies in Anglo-Saxon Institutions. (Chadwick.)
Life in Early Britain. (Windle.)
Old English Social Life. (Dyer.)
Foundations of England. (Ramsay.)
Anglo-Saxon Britain. (Grant Allen.)
Old English History. (Freeman.)
England under Anglo-Saxon Kings. (Lappenberg.)

CHAPTER V

THE NORMANS IN ENGLAND

A.D. 1050–1150

" Now are they in servage full many that erst were free."
(MANNYNG'S CHRONICLE)

A PERIOD of new beginnings is not likely to be one of peace, and the displacement, or at least the violent reform, of existing institutions, however vague these were, was bound to be a time of tumult and unrest.

The Norman period, which brought about great changes, or rather crystallized some of the most striking tendencies in the development of this country's civilization, has left behind it singularly little material for its story of social life. And with one marked exception, that story is told by Saxon chroniclers, who are not intent on making the best of their conquerors. The exception is that remarkable Norman document known as the Domesday Book, the record of the Conquest told in details of land and men and available wealth, which not only paints the Britain conquered by William, but also gives a fairly clear expression of Norman ideas of government.

The Normans—Who were these Normans and why do they rank as of such importance as completely to overshadow those earlier conquerors—Angles, Saxons, and Danes ?

Their race distinction is interesting. They were a blend of the Scandinavian blood, with its dauntless energy, vitality, and courage, together with the Latin element, intellectual, cultured, mystical, yet quick of wit and firm of will. To their subjects they are objects of unwilling admiration. " A fierce and crafty race," says Henry of Huntingdon, and Willian of Malmesbury describes them

with a half-concealed sneer as " finely apparelled, delicate in food, inured to war . . . ever ready to use stratagem where strength fails. They live in large buildings, envy their equals, wish to excel their superiors, and plunder their subjects, though they defend them from others. They are faithful to their lords, though a slight offence renders them otherwise. They are hospitable and religious, and are given to weigh treachery by its chances of success."

The Conqueror himself they regarded much as a schoolboy looks upon a severe but just headmaster. " He was a very wise man," says the *Chronicle*, " and more powerful, more dignified and stronger than any of his predecessors. He was mild to the good men who loved God, and over all measure severe to the men who gainsaid his will . . ., but among other things is not to be forgotten the good peace that he made in this land, so that a man who had any confidence in himself might go over his realm unhurt with his bosom full of gold; and no man dared slay another though he had done never so much evil against him."

Yet it was for ever to be remembered that " loving the tall deer as though he were their father," he ordained that whoso should slay hart or hind should be blinded; and that to make his great game preserve in the New Forest he " turned out of house and home a great multitude of men and took their land for thirty miles round."

This, however, was but a tiny detail in that immense reorganization of land which was the keynote of the Norman period, and is known by the name of the Feudal System.

Such a system was doubtless necessary if the conquest was to be complete. It was no new thing; in a vague and indeterminate way it had been in working for years past. But now it was not only to be made definite, it was to mark a strong line of demarcation between the races for more than a century. " Lo! thus," says Robert of Gloucester, moralizing over the treachery of unhappy Harold, " the English folk came to the ground for a

false king, who had no right to the kingdom, and came to a new lord, who had more right. And thus, certainly, the land was brought into the Norman's hand, and it is doubtful if ever it may be recovered. All the high men of England are of the Normans and the low men of the Saxons. . . . And men of religion, of Normandy also, he endowed here with lands and rents, so that there are few districts in England that the monks of Normandy have not somewhat in their hand."

And another chronicler speaks bitterly of the extortions of the conquerors. "Whence money was got no one asked, but get it they must; the more they talked of right, the more wrong they did."

There is, however, another side to the picture.

Effects of Conquest—When the Normans conquered England they opened to this land the gate of Europe. Her new position as a province of what was to become a continental empire ruled by her kings, meant that, without losing the sturdy characteristics of the race deep-rooted in her soil, she was gradually to take her part in the march of Latin civilization through Norman-French channels, and to share in its advantages. Latin thought, Latin education, Latin interests swamped the land, and the national insularity upon which England has always prided herself was broken down. All business of importance, all schools, all "polite" communication were transacted in Latin or Norman-French; it was the mark of a "boor" to keep the language or manners of the country.

"Lo! thus came England into Normandy's hand," laments Robert of Gloucester," and the Normans could speak then but their own speech and spoke French as they did at home, and did teach it also to their children, so that the high men of this land that came of their blood all hold that speech that they had from them. For unless a man know French, one accounts of him little. But low men hold to English and their own speech yet."

At first the line of demarcation proved a barrier indeed. For at least a hundred years the native Englishman looked upon the conquering race as foreigners, and noted with half-concealed disdain the French dress and meat, literature and songs, and with reluctant admiration the method of fighting with cavalry and bowmen. For himself, he held aloof with his own language and meagre literature, content to till the soil that was once his own under the rule of a Norman master.

Cosmopolitan Spirit in England—Yet, while this dividing line between the ranks of society in England undoubtedly existed, the twelfth century was to see an outburst of feeling that can fairly be termed cosmopolitan. The position of England as part of a great Angevin Empire does not alone account for it; all over Europe it is found in equal strength. Nor was it the expression of an empire's unity so much as that of a society, with universal ideas, language, and literature.

The foundation of this cosmopolitan spirit was, no doubt, to be found in the ideal of the Christendom of that period, with its unity of faith, its universal institutions, its constant intercourse with every part of Europe. The Church of those days, indeed, commanded a loyalty that was to prove a strong check upon the lesser local allegiances, such as Feudalism, which, uncorrected by the traditions of Christendom, might well have run rampant in Western Europe and developed the provincial spirit at the expense of the larger outlook. The Latin tongue which was her speech was the learned language of Europe, while French was common to the West, together with certain " dialects " spoken in Italy, North-West France, and England.

It was the Church which had issued that trumpet-call to the Crusades, a means of common action in which all Europe took part. It was from the Cistercian monks of Burgundy as a centre that she sent over Western Europe a new wave of monasticism, with all that it stood for in learning, architecture, art,

and education. And in these universal movements England took her full share. She opened her arms to continental bishops such as Anselm of Bec, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Hugh of Avalon, Bishop of Lincoln; and sent in return her John of Salisbury to be Bishop of Chartres. One of the most popular statesmen in the thirteenth century was Simon de Montfort, the "foreigner"; and in the middle of the twelfth century an Englishman, Nicholas Breakspear, sat in the Papal Chair.

Yet already in that twelfth century was heard the first note of disunity, when we find the Angevin Empire breaking up under King John, and hear of a dispute between Edward I. and Philip the Fair that was to be the prelude of that great disaster of mediæval times, the Hundred Years' War with France.

Intercourse between England and the Continent—But still throughout the next two centuries there is constant intercourse between England and the Continent. Chaucer's Wife of Bath, an ordinary, middle-class dame, had been two or three times to Rome on pilgrimage, and there was a constant stream of pilgrims from all parts of Europe to the shrine of St Thomas of Canterbury. Wandering scholars work their way from Bologna to Paris, and thence to Oxford or Cambridge, visiting many a flourishing city of Germany and France, and even Scandinavia, on their rounds. Legates hurry from one court to another throughout Western Christendom, monks move freely from monastery to monastery; and in the midst of the bustling interests of Europe, the Norman and the Anglo-Saxon gradually merge into the Englishman of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Feudal System—The most important change that England saw during this period was one that affected the social conditions of every rank, while at the same time creating classes where before no such distinction had existed.

Roughly speaking, it was the conscription method of

the time, and briefly it amounted to this. Before the Conquest the land was held by the people; after it, by the king. The statement is, of course, open to many modifications, for, as we have seen, the possession of land in very early times marked a distinction in class; but there was, with the exception of the actual serfs, much less distinction in class between the Saxon king, earl, and thegn or freeman, than between the Norman king, baron, and burgher or villein.

The keynote of the Conqueror's government was the complete supremacy of the king over baron, bishop, and burgher alike. He held a "Great Council," it is true, three times a year, but it was merely advisory, and more or less a picturesque fiction.

"He was very worshipful," writes the *Chronicle*; "he wore his crown thrice in every year when he was in England. At Easter he wore it at Winchester, at Whitsuntide at Westminster, at mid-winter at Gloucester, and then there was with him all the great men of all England, archbishops and bishops, abbots and earls, thegns and knights, . . . in order that ambassadors from foreign countries might admire the splendour of the assembly and the costliness of the feasts."

The actual method of government, apart from the "shire" and "hundred" courts, and the newer "manor" courts which were to absorb so much of the judicial and administrative business of the local districts, was by means of the strong links that were forged by the feudal system between the tenant and his overlord.

Put very briefly, this system meant that the tenant, were he baron or burgher, "paid his rent in steel," being bound to provide his own "overlord" with military service proportioned to his holding of land, or its equivalent in goods or money.

In reality the system was far less simple than its statement here; nor was it actually "systematized" for many a long year. Our only key to its working lies within the pages of Domesday Book, completed within two years of

the death of William I.—that is, in 1086. We must be content to know that the king had divided up the land among a great number of " tenants in chief," owing to him a definite amount of " dues," labour, and military service ; that these tenants sub-divided their lands into smaller holdings among the squires or gentry, as they might be called nowadays, and these again sub-let their land to " freemen " on like conditions. But even this bare statement may mislead, for the lowest class of landowner, the villein or the sokeman, may be ruled directly by the baron or the abbot and owe allegiance to him without any middleman. Each manor, in point of fact, was ruled like a petty state, and the owner thereof owed his people protection and justice as much as they owed to him their feudal dues, a certain amount of goods, labour, and military service in time of need.

Class Distinctions—A rough gradation of classes might start from the lowest—that of the serfs. Numbering, according to Domesday, about 25,000, this class was distinguished from the rest as being entirely without legal rights. The serf might be given a cottage and a garden, partly, at least, for his own use ; he might be given a certain amount of leisure and allowed to hold " property " in the shape of a tool or piece of furniture ; but he might be slain by his master's hand without interference by the law, and even sold to another, until the influence of the Church forbade it.

Next to him comes the " boor " (A.-S. *gebur*), once a free labourer, bound to work only two days a week for his lord, and possessing thirty acres of his own. But in Norman days, though he has certain legal rights, he is no longer free, since at his death the whole of his little property—oxen, cow, sheep, and even household utensils —becomes the possession of his lord.

Both these classes seem to have been included in that of the " villeins," the peasants who formed the great bulk of the conquered nation and remained its backbone during many years of obscurity under Norman lords.

The "vill," the "hundred," and the "shire" are for years the units of government; and to the superior court the "village" sends its representatives—the "reeve" and four of its men. But they are accounted little among the county magistrates, the baron and his friends, who name them in Domesday as "vile plebeians."

Feudal Service—The land owned by the "lord" and tenanted by the villeins was known as a "manor." The services given by the villeins in return for their strips of land were of various kinds. Both they and their wives must devote a certain number of days each week to plough, sow, reap, thresh, "hedge and ditch" for their lord; and at harvest and sowing time these days increased in number. For the rest of the week the villein worked upon his own scattered acres, some of the produce of which was also claimed by his lord. Thus one of the villages owned by the baron or abbot would provide his meat, another his bread, another honey or poultry, or eggs, or cloth. Hence the really valuable economic factor of the country was the obscure burgher, villein, or serf, the producer, and the backbone, therefore, of the community. And in his obscurity we will leave him for the present, until he emerges a century later, less Saxon but more English, to assert his position in the England that was emerging out of the iron clutch of her conquerors.

Meantime, let us glance at the manner of men and the lives of those who were helping to shape the England of the future during this period of transition. Our chief authority here, besides the remains of Norman architecture, is the famous Bayeux Tapestry, supposed to have been worked by William's queen and her ladies, a copy of which may be seen in the South Kensington Museum. Therein we see depicted mounted knights with spurs and Norman bowmen. The knight wears a hauberk or leathern coat of mail, covered with flat iron rings, underneath which is a long tunic of wool or linen. Long cloth stockings, called *chausses*, are cross-

gartered with thongs of leather. He carries a high shield with a rounded top. He is clean-shaven, as are the Norman barons, with close-cut hair. But his wife wears her hair in two long plaits falling from her neatly veiled head over her long tunic, which fits closely to below the waist and then is gathered full. We see again the long boats of the Normans, with square sail, and oars for use when sailing was impossible. They were steered by an oar which passed through a looped rope on the right side of the boat, and were large enough to carry the troops of horses we see being conveyed across the channel to the field of Senlac.

Then the tapestry shows us a Norman castle built of timber, on the top of a mound, with a ditch and bank below. This brings us to the consideration of the Norman baron, the dominant figure of the period.

The Norman Baron—His castle, with its square towers and " keep," its thick walls and deep moat guarded by a drawbridge and spiked gate, dominated the region in which it stood. Such a one is the White Tower of the Tower of London, built by a priest architect, Gundulf, Bishop of Rochester, at William's request, to guard the port of the River Thames. Lower down the river, on its tributary, the Archbishop of Canterbury built another square fortress, floored and divided into rooms for habitation, with fireplaces in the thick walls ; and before the end of the Norman period these great towers rose throughout the length and breadth of the land.

Within the boundaries of such a castle gathered a vast array of retainers, knights and soldiers, butlers, chamberlains, cooks and bakers. In the Bayeux Tapestry we see the latter busy boiling and baking at huge fires, and carrying the joints upon the roasting spits to the baron's table through a doorway in the hall. If the baron were a lover of sport and song, like Hugh the Fat, Earl of Chester, he held a " school " of tournaments in which youths were incited to every kind of knightly feat, or he kept a train of minstrels and " jongleurs " to amuse his leisure hours. Hawking and hunting filled such days as were not occupied

in fighting with or against his fellow-baron. For the period was, above all things, one of unrest and strife among a class whose energy is bound to find an outlet, and who is at his best when he leads his retainers on a crusade or builds a wonderful cathedral, and at his worst when he joyfully obeys the royal command to harry the rebellious north country with fire and famine and sword, and to destroy in his dread sweep town and village alike. A picture of that same "Wolf" baron, Hugh of Chester, drawn by a writer of the time,[1] may stand for a description of his class in general. "A violent, loose-living but generous barbarian, honouring self-control and a religious life in others, though he had very little of it himself; living for eating and drinking, for wild and wasteful hunting by which he damaged his own and his neighbours' lands; for murderous war against the troublesome Welsh; for fine indulgence without much reference to right and wrong; very open-handed; so fat that he could hardly stand; very fond of the noise and riotous company of a great following of retainers, old and young, yet keeping about him also a simple-minded, religious chaplain, who did his best, undiscouraged, though the odds were much against him, to awaken a sense of right in his wild flock."

Such was the man who besought Anselm, Abbot of Bec, to come over and help him found a new community of Benedictine monks at Chester, a step which led to that curious interview between Rufus and the learned monk of Bec, and was the actual reason for his being made Archbishop of Canterbury, very much against his will.

Education and the Monastic Life—That education and the religious life of the monastic schools during this period were at a low ebb indeed is proved by the need of the reforms of his predecessor, Lanfranc of Canterbury, who found the monks of Christ Church, the teachers and "professors" of that important school, "amusing themselves with falconry and horse-racing; loving the rattle of dice; indulging in drink; wearing fine clothes; disdain-

[1] Orderic.

ing a frugal and quiet life, and were more like fine gentlemen than monks." It was the canon laws of Anselm that struck a blow at all this, and brought about reforms that altered the whole face of the monastic system. These enact that monks " must be clad in proper garments of one colour," with plain shoes in place of the twisted horns in fashion at the court. They must have their heads tonsured and must not be present at drinking parties, nor drink " to the pin "—that is, from peg-pots marking out how much was to be swallowed at each draught.

Monks must not rent farms, nor must the clergy decide any fate involving capital punishment, nor act as bailiffs for laymen. Nine abbots were deposed for buying their offices, and the marriage of the clergy was strictly forbidden. The fashion among laymen of wearing the hair long was also condemned, and a special enactment is found against the practice of buying and selling slaves, " that wicked trade used hitherto."

The Court—It is in the life of Anselm, saint and archbishop, told by his faithful friend and chaplain, Eadmer, that we get a glimpse of the miseries of the people under the royal custom of moving the court from place to place—from Windsor to Gloucester, from London to Winchester. With the king went a huge crowd of courtiers, ecclesiastics, knights, and servants ; and " whatsoever tract of land they passed through, they spoiled, they wasted, they destroyed. What they found in the houses which they invaded, and could not consume, they took to market to sell for themselves, or they burned it ; or, if it was drink, after washing their horses' feet with it they poured it abroad. Their cruelties to the fathers of families, their insults to their wives and families, is shameful to remember ; and so, whenever the king's coming was known beforehand, they fled from their houses, and to save themselves and what was theirs, as far as they could, hid themselves in the woods, or wherever they thought they would be safest."

Connection with Europe—The chief debt that England owed to Anselm, however, as in fact to the Norman

Conquest as a whole, was the close communication established with the heart of Christendom at Rome, and with all the civilizing influences of education, literature, medicine, music, and architecture that the Continent could offer.

The monasteries of that day contained many a monk who had travelled in many lands, and could bring the wider spirit of Europe into the narrow cloisters of Britain; and we find the closest intercourse between European scholars, learned in medicine, history, law, and philosophy, and the monks of Malmesbury, Canterbury, or Gloucester.

The Norman architecture alone, when compared with the rude wooden structures of the Saxon, is a proof of the coming of a new and enlightened spirit, though tainted with savagery and despotism. Rochester Cathedral, Evesham Abbey, the east end of St Alban's Abbey, and part of Winchester and Gloucester Cathedrals, with the transepts of Ely, show what mighty builders were these Normans; and though none of the original work remains there, we have records of the great church built by Lanfranc at Canterbury, and that by Maurice, chaplain to William I., in London, which was to become famous as Old St Paul's.

A curious medley indeed are the social conditions of the century that followed the Conquest—a mixture of savage oppression and generous piety, during which men flock as readily to a crusade as to the harrowing of a countryside, hold life in no sanctity whatever, and love a Mass as well as a rough jest or a drinking song. But during these years, though to the outward eye the line of cleavage between Norman and Saxon still held strong, there was many a sign that the Norman of lower rank was coming under the influence of Saxon wife or mother as surely as the Saxon was being shaped by the rough hand of his conquerors. The villein and serf still stood aloof, but by the reign of Henry II., in the middle, that is, of the twelfth century, a blending of the two races had begun to come about, not yet complete, but constituting a change in social condi-

tions which was to show its real importance in the period that follows.

Exercises

1. Describe the feudal system, and give your own opinion as to its merits or demerits.
2. What remains of Norman architecture do you know?
3. What does England owe to the Norman Conquest?

CHAPTER VI

THE "WONDERFUL THIRTEENTH CENTURY"

A.D. 1150–1300

THE century that immediately followed the Norman Conquest was, we have seen, a period of turbulence and violence, coupled with a spirit of iron discipline; a time of "great crimes and great repentances"; a scene of violent contrasts in which a few people became extremely powerful, and the majority of the nation, once the owners of the land, lived in poverty and subjection. But this state of things was only a preliminary to the golden age of mediæval England, and prepared the way for what, with some reserves, may be called the most wonderful of centuries. The characteristic keynote of the thirteenth century will be found in the idea of Growth. Already we have seen in the fifty years that immediately precede it the germs of many new institutions and ideas, and in this period we may trace the Growth of Town Life, the Rise of the Universities, a partial Emancipation of the villeins, the Foundation of Trade Gilds, the Origin of Parliament, and many other interesting movements.

For England, in her growing spirit of Unity, with universal interests and a well-recognized position abroad, was beginning to learn how best to work and how best to play.

The strongest link which connects the England of the Norman Period with the England of the thirteenth century is the Spirit of Chivalry, which developed in the former and profoundly influenced the latter, being, of course, the inspiration of the romantic adventure known as the Crusades.

The Rise of Chivalry—In the very midst of the Norman oppression in England there awoke in Europe a great revival—intellectual, social, religious. It may have had its origin partly in a reaction from the true dark ages, the period from the sixth to the tenth century, when famine, pestilence, and the ruthless hand of the barbarian had devastated Europe. Or it may have been the outcome of the wave of religious excitement roused by the theory that the end of the world would come a thousand years after the Birth of Christ. We see its outcome in such a characteristic idea as that of the Truce of God, when, in the midst of a world at war, a knight would take solemn oath not to commit sacrilege ; to treat all travellers with respect ; to " keep the peace " from Wednesday evening to Monday morning in each week ; not to fight for purposes of private revenge ; and ever to keep sacred and to defend the persons of women and children.

Pilgrimages—Another result of this wave of devotion was the rush made by all sorts and conditions of men to visit the hallowed scenes of the Holy Land ; and the fact that many of these fell victims to the Turkish rulers only added zest to the enterprise. To visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, to come home and found a church in his native land, became the ambition of every man of wealth, and that of the " palmer " was to return with staff and hat decorated with palm twigs, or with cockle-shells from the shrine of St James of Compostella. " At that time," says a writer of these days, " began to flow towards the Holy Sepulchre so great a multitude. . . . First of all went the poorer folk ; then men of middle rank ; and lastly, very many kings, counts, marquises, and bishops ; aye, and a thing that had never happened before, many women bent their steps in the same direction."

At the head of that long line of pilgrims we may find Robert the Magnificent, father of the Conqueror ; and hard upon his steps comes Eldred, Bishop of York, who in the days of King William made the newly conquered realm famous in the Holy City by his gift of a wondrous chalice of gold.

Chivalry—But the chief outcome of this spirit of religious zeal was that remarkable body of sentiment and custom known as Chivalry, which has been well described as the " whole duty of a gentleman." Religion, Honour, Courtesy were its watchwords, and we have only to recall the condition of Western Christendom in the eleventh and twelfth centuries to realize the importance of the part it had to play.

Knighthood was its outcome, but its influence permeated every rank of society. The education of a knight began at the age of seven with the idea of the honour of personal service. The small boy was proud to hold the wine-cup behind the chair of his lord, or his stirrup when he rode on horseback. For seven years, though most of his time was spent in learning reading, writing, music, and the laws of chivalry from the ladies of the household, he studied also the duties of a squire—how to hunt and hawk and look after the stables and the kennels. At fourteen he could become a squire, when one of his duties was to carve for his lord at table, first tasting the food himself as a precaution against poison. He had also to arm him for battle, keep his weapons bright, fight by his side, lie at his door when he slept.

When the squire had mastered his duties, he had to " win his spurs " by performing some deed of valour that should prove him worthy of knighthood. Then came the ceremony of girding on his armour. All the previous night had been spent on his knees with sword held upright in his hands, keeping vigil before the altar upon which the new-forged armour lay. When morning came he served the Mass, and having thus dedicated himself by prayer and fasting to the chivalrous service of God, was solemnly dedicated by the Church to his high office. His armour was then buckled on by some fair damsel to whom he was bound to show devotion and respect. For " to do the pleasure of ladies " was not the least important part of his duty. Sometimes two knights vowed brotherhood in arms—dressed alike, wore similar armour, sang, played, prayed together, and supported each other in every kind of contest.

To men such as these the Spirit of Chivalry was intensely real. In one of the most famous of mediæval romances, Tristan, as he lies a-dying, says to his squire, " I now take leave of Chivalry, which I have so much loved and honoured. Wilt thou hear, Sagremor, the most shameful word that ever passed the lips of Tristan? *I am conquered.* I give thee my arms. I give thee my Chivalry."

The Militant Order—Out of this spirit rose two great militant, religious Orders, which played a prominent part in the story of their times.

The Knights Hospitallers, about the middle of the eleventh century, formed themselves into a body in order to found a guest-house or hospital for pilgrims, in connection with the Church of St Mary, opposite the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. This Hospice, dedicated to St John, was managed by Benedictine monks under one called the " Guardian of the Redeemer's Poor." When Godfrey of Boulogne visited it after the first crusade, he found that the monks were combining a life of absolute poverty with most devoted care of the sick and wounded. He endowed the Hospital of St John with lands and money, appointed a Grand Master, and built a new and splendid church for the Order, the inmates of which wore over their black robes an eight-pointed cross in white linen, afterwards to be known as the Maltese Cross.

Until the early part of the twelfth century the Order had been a company of priests and laymen, many of whom in course of time had taken religious vows and retired from the ranks of knighthood. But now their character changed to that of a militant order, which, whilst still tending the sick, had, as its special office, the duty of guarding the Holy Sepulchre. The members now wore a red tunic or surcoat, with a white cross, over their armour, and took the vows of ordinary monks, calling themselves the " Servants of the Poor." They boasted their independence of all spiritual authority save that of the Pope, and this, together with their immense number—fifteen thousand knights—great wealth, and important

work, made them the chief support in many ways of the system of Chivalry. When the Holy Land was lost we find them settling for a time at Rhodes, from whence they migrated to Malta, till they were dispersed by the French Revolution. A great London Hospital still bears their name, and can trace its supporters, as well as many of the adornments of its Chapel, to the Knights Hospitallers of old.

The Knights Templars were founded in the twelfth century by Baldwin, King of Jerusalem, as a " perpetual sacred soldiery " to defend the Temple and the Holy Sepulchre, as well as the brigand-infested passes on the road to Jerusalem. Prayer and fasting was part of their rule, but it was easily relaxed, and to " drink like a Templar " was only one of the sayings which reflect the mingled admiration, dread, and dislike with which they seem to have inspired their mediæval brethren. The Temple Church, which still stands in London, was built about 1185, when their arrogance and independence had already made them well-known figures in England. They wore a white tunic with a large red cross, and carried a banner, white and black, " fair and favourable to the friends of Christ, black and terrible to His foes."

Jealousy, combined with fear of their growing power and numbers, caused them to be suppressed at the end of the thirteenth century in France, on a charge of heresy ; and though Edward II. openly stated his disbelief in the charges brought against them as to faith and morals, seeing that these were mainly inspired by dismissed members of the Order, we find in the diary of Henry de Bray, for the year 1307, the brief notice, " In this year for heresy the Order of Templars was suppressed."

In Paris they had fared worse. Five hundred of their number were burnt ; and still on the anniversary of their suppression the legend says that the heads of seven Templars rise to meet a phantom clad in a red cross mantle, who asks : " Who shall now defend the Holy Temple ? Who shall free the Sepulchre of the Lord ? " To which the answer comes : " None ! The Temple is destroyed ! "

Effect of the Crusades—The whole thrilling story of the Crusades must be read elsewhere, but their effect on social history can be stated here.

By opposing the rule of the Turk in Europe they prevented Christendom from being overwhelmed by a tide of Eastern sentiment, custom, and religion which would inevitably have altered the whole condition of the Western World and stamped it indelibly with an alien civilization. At the same time the Crusades brought Europe, very much to her benefit, into touch with social conditions far more advanced than her own. The Saracen of the Middle Ages was a learned, cultured gentleman, skilled in medicine, music, science ; very superior to the rough, uneducated crusader of the Western World, and the latter was the gainer by the friendly intercourse so often found at this time. " Leeches " returned to Europe in the train of knights and barons, and taught some of the mysteries of their art to the rough and ready doctors of the West. In the sixteenth century their system of numbers was to replace the clumsy Roman figures ; from them we learnt the secrets of architecture and the elements of geometry.

Another important result of the Crusades on England was the opening up of the East to the commerce of the West. Knightly crusaders thought it by no means amiss to carry on an extensive trade in the silks and spices of Palestine and Syria, and there was a steady stream of commercial enterprise across the Mediterranean, especially by way of Venice, the " southern terminus of a great trade route," to which was borne in growing quantities the produce of England and Northern Europe, to be distributed through the Eastern World.

Upon the literature of the day the Crusades have left their clear mark. They are the theme of almost all the epics of Chivalry. Charlemagne, Roland, Bevis of Hampton play their part, regardless of dates, alongside with Richard the Lion Heart and Godfrey of Boulogne.

Gigantic failures as they were, they still gave to the Middle Ages that inspiration of Hope and High Ideals

which accounts for all that is finest in the century we are now about to study.

The Crusades had been undertaken as a conflict with foes of flesh and blood; in the thirteenth century there came the call for a new crusade against spiritual, and therefore more dangerous, enemies—vice and ignorance.

Monastic Influence—The monastic system, which had done so great a work in this direction, was, for the time, under eclipse. Yet, because it is impossible to understand the conditions of the thirteenth century without realizing what the work had been, we will once again look back to the previous period during which Norman and Angevin kings held rule.

It is difficult to overrate the influence of the Church upon the social conditions of the twelfth century. We see the mediæval bishop as the one great restraining force against the despotism of the king. Anselm got the better of Rufus over the question of investiture, and incidentally made it clear that the bishop baron, with the power of the Church behind him, was no mere vassal where spiritual things were concerned. Archbishop Thomas of Canterbury, though slain over a question of lay rights and clerical offenders, won his cause and the universal esteem of Christendom. Hugh of Avalon, Bishop of Lincoln, held the turbulent Henry II. in his gentle hand, was the only check upon the restless Richard, and was borne to his honoured grave by the miscreant John Lackland.

More important is the fact that the bishops and abbots, great landholders as they were, acted often as a buffer between the merchant or working class and the exactions of baron or king. No doubt the rule of the mediæval ecclesiastic was despotic enough, but it was a fatherly despotism that by no means disregarded the rights of freeman or villein.

Now these men, whose names have come down to us as opponents of the royal power, were the product of the monastic system of which this twelfth century had seen a marked revival. The revival began in the days of

Henry I., when Normans built many monasteries in expiation of many crimes. In the reign of Stephen we find that over a hundred were founded, probably as the only means of coping with the utter misery of the land during those nineteen years. As many more, built in the reign of Henry II., were the aftermath of the earlier religious revival.

In their lonely outposts at Byland, Rievaulx, and Fountains the Cistercians kept the rule of St Bernard in all its severity, while carrying on an energetic warfare against evil-doing.

" What shall we think," cries the Augustinian, William of Newburgh, " of all these religious places which in King Stephen's time began to flourish but that they are God's castles, wherein the servants of the true anointed King do keep watch, and His young soldiers are exercised in warfare against spiritual evil ? "

Then new Orders arose, peculiar to England, such as that founded by St Gilbert of Sempringham, himself the descendant of old English and Norman forbears. Returning from an idle life in France to the England he had left as a runaway student, Gilbert turned schoolmaster and set up a co-education school for children. Gradually this developed into a religious house of nuns and monks—a double monastery such as we have seen in the days of Hilda of Whitby. The Gilbertine Priories which flourished with amazing fervour all over eastern England kept the rule of St Augustine, but were independent foundations, and strong enough to count as important allies of Thomas of Canterbury in his struggle with the king.

It was in the year of that same Henry's accession that news was brought to England of the new Pope, Adrian IV., known here as Nicholas Breakspear, son of a poor English clerk at Langley, near St Albans. As a boy " of graceful appearance but somewhat lacking in clerkly requirements," he had begged to be admitted to the abbey as a novice, but had been dismissed with the gentle hint, " Wait, my son, and go to school, that you may become better fitted for the cloister." The University

of Paris claimed him as she had claimed so many a wandering scholar, and there he won his educational spurs, and later on joined the Order of the Augustinian Canons in Provence. His election as Prior caused a revolt; the Provençals would have no Englishman to rule them, and Nicholas was offered a post at the Papal Court, from which he soon became bishop, cardinal, and pope. He lived to approve the good work of Theobald in the See of Canterbury, but not to know of the struggle of Archbishop Thomas, whose death secured a victory that was greater in appearance than reality. For the death of Thomas Becket left the Church in England "without a programme and without a leader," and within a few years the Sees were filled by courtier prelates, amongst whom Hugh of Lincoln and Richard of Canterbury stand as marked exceptions. To St Hugh England owed the introduction of the Carthusian Order, as well as the firm opposition which prevented the king from appointing his own lay courtier friends to vacant stalls in the cathedral.

But by the end of the twelfth century the old spirit of zeal had died down. Even the Cistercians, the White Monks, whose rigid rule had formed a protest against the laxity of the Benedictines, the Black Monks, had fallen from their first ideal of poverty. They had now become the greatest sheep-farmers in the land; and while England lost on the spiritual side by their decline she gained on the material plane by her largely increased trade in wool.

If religious ideals were to be maintained in Europe in days which were fast growing lax in morals and uninspired in faith, a new impulse was a necessity, and this was to come in the early years of the thirteenth century.

Coming of the Friars—The Dominicans—St Dominic in Spain, in the year 1216, had founded an Order of Friar Preachers, for the purpose not merely of attacking a definite heresy of his own day, but of bringing the spirit of the cloister into the world. Not only priests, but lay people, men and women, were enlisted into his "Militia of Jesus Christ," and wore the white tunic, with the

black cloak, embroidered with a black and white cross. These members of the Third Order, who numbered among them the famous Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, killed at the Siege of Toulouse in 1218, were bound by a simple rule of prayer and good works; while the monks, the "Hounds of the Lord," were fighting ignorance and heresy with the weapons of learning and eloquence.

The first Dominican settlement was that corner of Old London now marked by the space between Blackfriars and London Bridge, and one of their earliest undertakings was at Oxford, where their trained minds and intellectual skill made them an immediate success in the world of letters. The whole century, indeed, is dominated by the philosophy of one of their Order, St Thomas Aquinas, the greatest of the mediæval "Doctors," whose teaching touches even so minute a social question as the right of a serf to receive Holy Orders without the consent of his lord —a right which St Thomas consistently upheld, although he accepted serfdom as part of the inevitable conditions of the time.

The Franciscans—Three years after the appearance of the Dominicans at Dover a little band of Franciscans tramped, in their grey tunics, from Canterbury to London. By the rule of that joyous Troubadour of God, St Francis of Assisi, lover of man and bird and beast, they were pledged not to possess house or land; but their brother friars, the Dominicans, afforded them hospitality until their rule was relaxed sufficiently to allow them to hire a plot of ground in Cornhill on which to build their cells of wattles filled in with straw. From thence they went into the poorest parts of the city, preaching, visiting, nursing the sick, living on the bread given them by kind-hearted onlookers, "mixing their sour small beer with water to make it go farther," and always practising the light-hearted gaiety of their Founder in the midst of hardship and poverty. Then two of the little band visited Oxford, again as guests of the Dominicans; they gave lectures—religious and scientific—both alike sound in their simplicity and truth. Crowds of disciples flocked about

them; their success was as immediate as that of the Black Friars.

Such an appeal was made by the message as well as by the character of the messengers, that during the next few years Black and Grey Friars were to be found in every large town in England. At first the Dominicans were the more learned, Franciscans the more practical in the character of their work, though often enough in those early days of fervour the two Orders joined hands in their labours. Finally the Friars became an important party within the Church, pledged to help the parochial clergy of the town as "evangelizers" or itinerant preachers, as well as in actual works of mercy.

The nature of their work made them the objects of scrutiny, criticism, often of jealousy, and their very popularity was a source of danger to themselves. The attacks of Langland in his *Piers Plowman* and the gibes of Chaucer turn mainly on the charge that the Friar was "the best beggar in his house," with the defects of character that would accompany such a vocation; but, though the rule of poverty may have been to some degree relaxed in course of years, the fact remains that at the Reformation, when the Friars were the first —and the last—to be attacked, there was no spoil to be found. From the year 1532, when the Franciscan Convent of Christ Church was dissolved, to the year 1540, when the Dominican Priory at Norwich was handed over to the Corporation, nothing was to be found in their possession but the "churches in which they worshipped, the libraries in which they studied, the houses in which they passed their lives." [1]

Their effect on the social condition of England, both as regards learning and practical work, was marked enough. They numbered among them such names as the Franciscan Roger Bacon, one of our earliest scientists, Hales and Duns Scotus, as well as Albertus Magnus and the Dominican Saint Thomas Aquinas. A Franciscan, Peter of Wimbledon, physician to Henry III.'s queen, is mentioned by Adam de Marsh in a letter to Bishop

[1] Jessop, *Coming of the Friars.*

Grosseteste as a man "of excellent reading and great probity." Another Franciscan, Reginald de Stokes of Oxford, is described as "an honourable man of mature judgment, of advanced learning and skill in the arts and in medicine, whose knowledge of the world, circumspect discretion, mature discourse, and humble devotion made him worthy of trust."

These sayings must, in fairness, be set over against the prejudices of Langland, whose business as a reformer was to point out the darker sides of human nature; and against the jeers of Chaucer, whose more kindly humour is still ready enough to whet his jest at the expense of others. Even in those days, as in these, the "parson," in literature or on the stage, was fair game for mockery.

Rise of the Universities—That both Orders of Friars played an important part in the development of the universities of the thirteenth century is clear from the records.

There was possibly the germ of a university—more probably a grammar school—at Oxford in the days of Alfred; but not until the thirteenth century do we find distinct recognition of such an institution, though it certainly existed during the previous century in some form or other. Early in the thirteenth century we find three great centres of study flourishing at Paris, Bologna, and Oxford, when Paris was known as "the first school in Christendom," and Oxford was a good second.

Bologna, already the home of Dominicans, was noted for its great Law Schools; Paris and Oxford were not only the theological centres of Europe, but also the homes of science. Cambridge, popularly supposed to have been founded by a band of scholars who migrated from Oxford owing to a "town and gown" scuffle in the days of King John, may have developed its "schools of repute," as they are termed in the twelfth century, from a priory of Augustinian Canons at Barnwell. Giraldus Cambrensis was one of its scholars and teachers, and by the middle of the reign of Henry III. we have

distinct mention of a " society of scholars," a recognized and powerful body.

The university of that day was a spontaneous growth, consisting of men rather than of buildings. The scholars, attracted by the personality of a famous teacher, or by the wish to qualify themselves for the many new openings for men of letters offered by the wider outlook of the time, gathered literally round some " Chair " of Studies, and sat either on benches or on the stone floor to consider the grammatical and literary " dialectics " of the *trivium*, or the music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy of the *quadrivium*. Later on other " faculties " were added; and the university became the home of theology, law, and medicine.

The scholars formed themselves into a Gild, as a corporate, self-governing body, whose distinguishing mark was the right of granting a licence to teach, generally given by papal or royal charter.

Their " disputations " demanded a hall, but the scholars lived where they liked until the thirteenth century, when we find Walter de Merton, Chancellor of England, founding a " hostel," afterwards Merton College, containing a chapel, hall and kitchen, and dormitories with private studies. Then, under the influence of a Franciscan friar, the widow of Sir John de Baliol (father of John Baliol, the rival of Bruce) founded Baliol College in fulfilment of a penance given to her husband. At Cambridge, in 1284, the earlier College, Peterhouse, was founded by Bishop Hugh of Ely. Thus the work of founding colleges went on apace. Most of the members of the University were probably as poor as Chaucer's " poore clerke of Oxenford," who would rather—

> " have at his beddés head
> Twenty bookés clad in blak or reed . . .
> Than robés riche, or fiddle, or gay psautrie:
> But al be that he was a philosophre,
> Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre."

Their fees and maintenance were provided sometimes from a " common chest," into which fines were paid,

sometimes by begging, sometimes, as in the case of Merton, by pious founders, or by tithes from their own parish. Nor was life luxurious in those early colleges, whose unglazed windows were closed with wooden shutters, whose floors were of clay, and walls unplastered, and whose furniture consisted at most of forms and trestle tables, with a brazier to keep off a little of the chill damp of an Oxford or Cambridge winter.

Exercises

1. Describe any picture you have seen or can imagine that illustrates the meaning of Chivalry.
2. What connection could you trace between modern events and those of the days of the Crusades? What does modern life owe to the Crusades?
3. Write an imaginary conversation between two students of Oxford, one belonging to the thirteenth, one to the twentieth century, illustrating the changed conditions of college life.
4. How was the mediæval period affected by (1) Monasticism, (2) The Coming of the Friars?

Chapter VII

THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF MEDIÆVAL TOWNS

A.D. 1200–1350

TO the period lying between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries belongs the story of the Growth of our English Towns, a story woven closely with that of many other interesting developments in mediæval life.

The towns, as their first historian[1] has pointed out, play an important part in the development of the English race, and were the chief means of restoring liberty to a conquered people. For it was in their "burgh moots," in their Gild Halls, their mills and market squares that the burghers were quietly working for right and freedom, for self-government and free speech while the eyes of the world were directed to the more showy deeds of knight and baron.

Before the Conquest, England had her Saxon towns, though the earlier settlers, as we have seen, regarded those built by the Romans with dread as "graves of freedom surrounded by nets." But gradually, because of the need of mutual protection, of supply, of buying and selling, houses were built close to one another with a protecting wall encircling them.

The Tun—Originally the *tun* was an enclosure about a house and yard, or round a farm and its outbuildings; but gradually the word came to mean a collection of men within a boundary, much in the same way as *ham* developed out of the *home* of the family into that of the tribe, and *burh* from denoting any fortified spot became the cluster of men and homes around it. A few Roman

[1] J. R. Green.

towns were rebuilt and kept their suffix of *ceaster*, or camp, in various forms, such as Winchester, Cirencester, Exeter. The Danes scattered their settlements along the North-East Coast, and called them *-bys* in some localities, such as Whitby and Grimsby; or *wics*, either to denote the dwelling of a king or bishop, such as Norwich, or the market-place round which the town was built. From the Northmen also rose the *port* towns, such as Bridport, Langport, and the *port* of Northampton, built by Sweyn in 1010, the name signifying an enclosed place in which merchandise may be bought.

Monastery Towns—In days when the monastery stood for marked activity both in spiritual and social life, it was obvious that many of these towns grew up around its walls. In Saxon times we find York not only the seat of kings, but developing its town around the famous abbey of St Mary's.

In Domesday Book an interesting record shows how such a town as Bury St Edmunds grew up round the abbey tomb of the martyred king. "There are now two mills and two fishponds. It contains a great circuit of land where there are 30 priests and clerks; 28 nuns; and poor brethren who pray daily for the king and for all Christian people; 75 bakers, brewers, tailors, launders, shoemakers, parminters, cooks, porters, serving men; and these all do service to the Abbot and Brethren. Besides whom there are 13 on the land of the reeve who have their dwellings in the same town. . . . In the whole there are now 342 dwellings in the demesne of the land of St Edmund, which was ploughland in the time of King Edward."

In the same way we find Peterborough growing out of the settlements of folk of various degrees under the protection of the abbot.

For the abbots of those days, besides being great land-owners, were good landlords, and men gladly took service under them and accepted their control even when the little lay community that served the needs of the brethren had grown into a thriving town. Thus the abbot of

Reading Abbey is seen as chief magistrate of the district, trying thieves and criminals within his territory, having his own money mint, choosing the mayor and corporation. No newcomer could receive the freedom of the borough without the abbot's consent. Even Parliaments were held within the abbey. In Jocelin's *Chronicle* we read how a stranger inquires of an old peasant woman, "Who was the master, who the keeper of the manor?" She answered that it belonged to the new abbot of St Edmunds, the keeper of it one Arnald.

"How did he behave to the people of the manor?" asked the stranger. To which she answered that he used to be a devil incarnate, an enemy of God and a flayer of the peasants' skins—skinning them like live rats; but that now he dreads the new abbot, knowing him to be a wise and a sharp man, and so treats the people reasonably.[1]

Some idea of the vastness of detail of these abbeys and their contribution to the common life of the town may be gathered from the description of Langland, the "Piers Plowman" reformer of the fourteenth century, who, though he regards monastic institutions with the jaundiced eye of the religious bigot, paints a very living picture of the great church, with its carved and gilded arches and windows full of shields and trade marks, or of stained glass; of the cloisters, where the monks read, played a kind of draughts, and washed in the finely wrought bronze "lavabos." He shows us the chapter-house "like a vast church carved and painted," and the refectory as a hall "fit for a knight." The Abbot's house stands apart from the monastery itself, which is officered by the Prior, the Precentor, who looked after the church music, the Sacristan, the Hospitaller who attended to the needs of travellers, the Cellarer, Infirmarian, and the Almoner, who gives alms daily to the poor at the gates; the monks who taught in the schools; the kitchener, seneschal, and a host of millers, bakers, smiths, tailors and gardeners, who ranked

[1] For a most interesting plan and description of an abbey, see *A History of Everyday Things in England*, by M. and C. Quennell.

as " clerics " in the sense that they were attached to the precincts of the abbey.

In the *Chronicle* of Jocelin of Brakelond we find great emphasis laid on the duty of hospitality. When Abbot Samson is installed he " spends his day of festival with more than a thousand dinner guests with great rejoicing." Directions for regulating hospitality are given. " When the abbot is at home he is to receive all guests of whatsoever condition they may be, except religious and priests of secular habit, and except their men who present themselves at the gate of the court in the name of their masters ; but if the abbot be not at home, then all guests of whatsoever conditions are to be received by the cellarer up to thirteen horses. But if a layman or clerk shall come with more than thirteen horses, they shall be entertained by the servants of the abbot, either within the court-lodge or without, at the expense of the abbot."

The abbot, of whose election we get another most interesting picture in Jocelin's *Chronicle*, was, of course, a person of great importance, ranking as a peer, as lord of the manor and as ruler of fifty knights. The monks who bowed to his authority within the monastery walls were the reading, thinking men of their day, the *intelligentsia*, as the modern phrase has it. While the baron and the knight were absorbed in interests of battlefield or forest, they had time to shape all the civilizing influences of England. And so, in an age when they stood for the doctors, artists, men of science, as well as the historians, scribes, and architects of the nation ; when their monasteries were the hospitals, almshouses, hotels, and relief offices of their period, it was inevitable that the abbey should become the centre of a permanent population.

These " tenants " had originally to pay for their land by their labour, but Jocelin speaks of the " reaping penny " which soon began to take its place, and traces the gradual growth in freedom of the town. " Before it was free all of them used to reap as serfs ; the dwellings of knights and chaplains and of the servants

of the court lodge being alone exempt from this payment." When the peasant would not pay, the " cellarius " used to take instead a kettle or a stool, or even the door of the house. Sometimes for the money was substituted a payment in kind. Four thousand eels had to be caught in the marshlands and brought to the monks ; and when these failed to appear punctually, a charge was made of a penny for so many acres of land—the origin of our modern idea of " rent." Gradually, too, there came rebellion against the custom of housing the sheep in the folds of the convent at night so as to secure the manure for the land ; and occasionally against the custom of taking the tenant's corn to the mill of the abbot for grinding. Sometimes this unwillingness to pay feudal dues to the abbot led to serious friction between townsmen and abbey, and a quarrel ensued, as in 1314, when St Alban's Abbey was for ten days besieged by the tenants because they were not allowed the freedom of grinding their own corn.

Feudal Towns—Other towns, such as Rochester or Arundel, grew up around a great feudal castle under much the same conditions. These were, in early days, the property of the baron, or were divided up among different thegns, for whom the burghers fought, worked, and built their roads and bridges. Gradually many of the lesser thegns would join the ranks of the burghers, and thus rights over trade and property began to develope. A long step towards freedom was taken when the citizens bought the right of paying the fixed tax in place of labour dues, and of deciding disputes by their own juries.

A curious instance of how this sometimes came about is seen in an incident taken from the Records of Leicester in 1253. " In the days of Robert de Meulan, then Earl of Leicester, it befel that two kinsmen—Nicholas, son of Hacon, and Geoffrey, son of Nicholas of Leicester—waged battle for a certain piece of land that was disputed between them ; and they fought from the hour of prime till past noon. And as they thus strove together, one drove the other up to a certain small ditch, and as he

stood over it and should have fallen in, his kinsman cried to him, ' Have a care of that ditch which is behind thee, lest thou fall therein ' ; whereupon there arose such a shout and tumult from those who stood and sat around, that the lord Earl heard their shout even in the castle where he sat, and inquired of his men what might be the cause thereof ; and they told him how these two kinsmen fought for the land, and how one drave the other to the ditch and warned him when he stood over it and should have fallen therein. Then the burgesses, moved with pity, made a covenant with the said Earl, that they should give him threepence yearly from each house which had a gable in the High Street on condition that he would allow them to dispose and determine all pleas concerning the citizens by means of twenty-four jurats." [1]

A visit to a town such as Arundel even nowadays will help us to reconstruct with a good deal of success the typical feudal town of the thirteenth century.

The castle (now restored in thirteenth-century fashion) stands upon the hill which commands the road from Portsmouth to London. The keep and high outer rampart stood there in Saxon days and were part of the manor of Arundel left by King Alfred's will to his nephew Aldhelm. To this the Normans—probably Earl Roger de Montgomery—added a square tower, and an Oratory dedicated to St Martin and mentioned in Domesday Book. The former is protected by a portcullis. Below the east tower lies the dungeon to which were sent prisoners from the borough courts, over which the mayor presided as the Earl's deputy.

Round the great inner quadrangle stand the buildings containing the long hall, the private rooms and kitchens, on three sides, with the keep on the fourth. To this earlier structure Richard Fitzalan, the eleventh earl, added the typical thirteenth-century drawbridge over the moat, with portcullis connected by an arched way with a chamber above it. The gateway itself was flanked by two square embattled towers, with dungeons beneath.

[1] Quoted from Miss Bateson's *Records of Leicester*, 1899.

At the south-west corner of the rampart stands the Barbican or Bevis Tower, completing a building which was to know at least four sieges during its existence.

In the last of these we have actual details of how, in the Earl's absence, the sheriff of the county defended it on behalf of Charles I. against Sir William Waller; in the earlier sieges, when Robert Belesme held it against Henry I.; and Queen Matilda, step-daughter of Adeliza (to whom the castle and manor had been bequeathed by Henry), against Stephen, the townsfolk would most certainly have been called upon to take up arms in its defence.

At one end of the bridge which spans the Arun below the castle stands the old corn exchange and corn market, where the wheat of the rich arable land of the manor was bought and sold. Just beyond the bridge, in the fourteenth century, stood a large almshouse (now in ruins), known as the *Maison Dieu*, or Hospital of the Holy Trinity. Here twenty poor aged men, being unmarried or widowers, and tenants or servants of the Earl, were admitted if they could say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Hail Mary in Latin.

In the market place was to be found the court-house, where the *motes* were held; the centre of borough life from the time when the town was granted, probably in the days of the Conqueror, a free charter in return for fixed dues.

Adjoining the present town are the ruins of what was in the days of Stephen a Priory " of the Causeway " (de Calceto), founded by Queen Adeliza, widow of Henry I., for the purpose of superintending the causeway leading through flooded marshes to the wooden bridge over the Arun. This, since it was the one means of access to the town for those bringing in corn from the scattered fields, and fish from the farther reaches of the river, had to be kept in constant repair by the monks.

Just above the castle stood the Priory of St Nicholas, which became, in the fourteenth century, the College of the Holy Trinity. This was destroyed at the Reformation, and only its chapel, now known as the Fitzalan Chapel,

still remains. Just behind this still stands the fourteenth-century parish church of St Nicholas, with its wall paintings and font of old Sussex marble. Beyond this we can trace the line of the ancient walls enclosing the borough, in one of which still stands St Mary's Gate, one of the two entrances to the town. Within these the little houses or cottages of wood and rubble and stone would cluster thickly about the slopes below the great castle, guarded below by the broad stream of the Arun, and above by the threatening apertures through which the archers flung a storm of arrows upon invading foes.

Town Government—Much light is thrown upon the social conditions of those mediæval days by what we know of the system of government in such towns as these. For it was the burgher, rather than the knight, who represented the interests of England in the early Parliaments of these days; and the origin and growth of Parliament belongs far less to the social history of the period than the method of local government.

As early as the times of which Domesday Book is the record we find these inhabitants of town and borough living under a rough kind of local rule.

The Port Reeve—The Burh-Mote met two or three times a year to settle local business. The chief official of a town was the Port Reeve, who collected tolls due to the king from citizens for licences or privileges in trade. His name was nothing to do with seaport business, *portus* meaning merely an enclosed market. He stood in the same relation to a town that a Shire Reeve, or *sheriff*, stood to the county, representing the king on one hand and the townspeople on the other.

It is interesting to note that many of the towns, instead of being taxed on their various trades, preferred to pay a lump sum of money to the king through their Portreeve, and in return for this " rent of town revenues " received a charter of liberties.

A sixteenth-century record of a town that claimed these privileges from very early times is found in a document entitled " Priviledges belonging to ye Toune of

Angmering, Sussex." Its connection with the nunnery of Sion in Middlesex is seen in the following: "Tennants-holding of Syon hold, taken out of the Records of ye Pipe Office:

i. They ought to be free from all charges whatsoever to the King's House.
ii. All their goods and merchandise must be freed from payment of any customs or other demands whatsoever in all the King's ports whatsoever.
iii. To have all felons goods and wracks of the sea . . .
iv. Not to be arrested by the Sheriffe or any of the Bailiffs within the libertie.
v. To be freed from all taxaciouns and imposicions whatsoever in as large and ample manner as the King would grant."

At the end of the twelfth century we find the Portreeve styled Mayor in London, and a little later in Bristol, Gloucester, and Oxford.

The Corporation—It was not, however, till the thirteenth century that we find the true development of the corporate or communal idea in towns—that is to say, a body of citizens with mayor and aldermen to safeguard their interests. Who were these citizens? The *burgesses* or burghers of those days were small landholders or householders possessing a strip of cultivated land, much like our modern "allotment," just outside the town. On one side of the town you would see strip after strip of such land belonging to private owners; on the other side lay a big stretch of common ground, where any man might graze his cow or pig.

These burghers, who were first called to Parliament during this period, were therefore solid men enough, paying money instead of personal service, rent and "customs," or tolls, on their rights of trade. They themselves imposed tolls on strange traders entering the town, and were keenly alive to all their privileges as local tradesmen. Their position and rights were handed on from father to son, but might occasionally be bought at a

price. They were divided into *wards*, over each of which was set an *alderman*, who got his name from the earlier title of a chieftain or magistrate. These worked with the mayor or portreeve, and by the end of the fifteenth century were joined by other representatives of the burghers so as to form a town council, with mayor and aldermen at its head.

Manors—Sometimes the *tûn* developed from a *manor*, an agricultural community, with a lay baron or an ecclesiastical body at its head. This was more like our modern village, in which, except for the owners of the " great house " in its midst, all the inhabitants live in the village street, and in those days were for the most part villeins, bound to their lord's service. But there would generally be a few " free-holders," paying some fixed rent and liable for military service unless they paid " shield money " instead. The local criminals of *tûn* or *burh* would be tried by the *Court Leet*, presided over by the lord of the manor, who claimed also the right of all tolls and dues, collected in this case by the *bailiff*.

Towns, manors, and gilds alike had the right of making " by-laws " (O.E. *bý*, a village or habitation), which were a body of customs or liberties which could be appealed to on occasion.

The records of our old towns show a distinct advance in local government in the fourteenth century. Thus those of Winchester show us that the town possessed a " meyre," a council of twenty-four " sworn men," two " bailiffs " or constables, four " sergeants," who were the servants of mayor and bailiffs, two " coroners," representing the king. The aldermen have their own special duties, such as rent-collecting or the taking of tolls for every cart-load of goods entering the town; the town clerk has to register " villeins being non-freemen," who come to market. Strict regulations are made as to the size, texture, and workmanship of the blankets, quilts, and cloth which were the town's chief industries; and a tax is paid for each house where they were made.

In Worcester, the " Weaving Town," the Ordinances

publicly read at Michaelmas show us an "Upper Chamber" of twenty-four men, wearing a special livery, known as the "Great Clothing," and renewed every three years. Their by-laws are mainly drawn up for maintaining peace. The inhabitants are prohibited from wearing "signs"—badges or liveries not of their own crafts; they may keep a "defensible weapon" at home, but may not draw it on one another.

The *communes* or burghers choose their officers for the town council and elect citizens to Parliament in the Gild Hall, where part of the wool market is held and the burghers house the goods. Under the Gild Hall lies the "citizens' prison," where burghers are privileged to lie for small offences rather than in the common gaol. Labourers are to stand for hire at Grass Cross from 5 a.m. in summer and from 6 a.m. in winter. "Pygges may not run about the streetes." The water near "Severn brigge" must be kept clean.

Then there are various trade regulations. Butchers must not be cooks—a strangely significant ordinance! Those who sell ale that is not drunk on the spot must have a "sign" at their door. Bakers of "horse bread," made from coarse beans, must not keep inns!

The less sordid side of life was not forgotten; and it was ordained that "Five Pageants each year to the worship of God and the City shall not be to seek. The crafts shall duly sustain them, and their lights and torches shall take part in the City Watch on the Eve of St John."

The Gilds—The mention of the Gilds brings us to what is perhaps the most important element in the development of mediæval town life. They are of ancient origin, and there is a document extant before the Conquest which speaks of a religious gild in connection with St Peter's, Abbotsbury, to which one Orky grants a hall in memory of himself and wife. A "Steward" is to arrange for a yearly feast for the members; good behaviour is enforced. Contributions are to be made in "money or wax" for the Church loaves, wheat, and wood. The document ends thus: "Now have we faith through God's

assistance that the aforesaid ordinance, if we rightly maintain it, shall be to benefit of us all." There is also distinct mention of gilds at Bideford, Exeter, and Sidmouth during the eleventh century.

These, however, were all religious gilds, whose object was merely to keep up a feeling of good fellowship among members who attended the same church. It was not until the twelfth century that there developed the great Trade Gilds, which were the backbone of the towns of the next three hundred years.

Merchant Gilds—The Merchant Gilds were organized societies of master workers, of the class of the richer burgher or thegn. Their object was to " monopolize and nourish trade," to obtain freedom from " dues," to attract trade to the town. From time to time they met for " 4 dayes of spekyng to gedere for the common profyte."

This " Mornspeach " must be attended by each sister or brother, or a fine of a penny is paid. If a member " sit down and grumble " at having to leave his business, he is fined another penny. New members are elected, who find sureties, and pay five shillings entrance fee. The meeting is strictly private, and " no one must speak maliciously or despysingly to his brother or sister or be rebel of his tongue against the alderman." Strict etiquette is observed. No one may appear before the alderman and the brothers and sisters " in tabard nor cloke, bare leg or bare foot." If he disobeys the " dean " at Mornspeach when told to be quiet, he must " receive the rod or pay a fine." At the banquet he " must not sleep nor keep the cup standing."

Apart from these trivialities, it was the work of the Merchant Gild not only to regulate trade by means of an organized " union," to examine goods as to quality, to test weights and measures, to lend money to the town, but also to influence the conduct and look after the welfare of its members and dependants. It was the duty of the gild to reconcile members who had quarrelled and who wanted to go to law. If the member persisted,

he might do so, but he had to pay his gild a fine. Poor members were helped in losses " by sea or fire or by the sending of God." Bread was regularly given to the poor and sick ; the needy were helped to earn their living ; pilgrimages were arranged for and members helped to go on them. At Lincoln each member provided a penny to send one of their number to the Holy Land ; and there was a regular Gild of Palmers at Ludlow.

The gilds were the bankers of the members, receiving their money and putting it to good account. Sometimes, as at Bodmin, several gilds combine to rebuild a church ; at Birmingham they repair roads and bridges ; at Worcester they maintain a " free school."

From all this we can picture them as a strong, self-governing body, made up of men of " good reputation and character," solid, well-to-do citizens, exercising a valuable influence over the more unruly members of the town or borough.

Craft Gilds—The Craft Gilds were similarly constituted bodies of workmen, who, in those days, when every citizen was a " producer " in one form or another, found it necessary to band together the members of each trade for purposes of mutual protection and interests. Thus their aim was to prevent interference or underselling by foreign traders and to keep up their own standard of work. This was done by the yearly inspection of a committee, who rejected goods of faulty workmanship and placed their " hall mark " on those that passed muster. We have a relic of this custom in the " lion," the badge of the Silversmiths' Gild to this day. As their own Craft Ordinary sets forth, their aim was " to enforce brotherly behaviour and charity and to put out and do away with all kinds of bad work and deceits."

Thus, besides helping their poorer brethren, as in the case of the Merchant Gilds, tending the sick, having Masses said for the dead, and looking after the interests of the parish church with which each gild was connected, they had to regulate the employment of apprentices, hire servants, and see that the privileges of their particular

gild were maintained. They, too, were sometimes the cause of the unruliness with which the Merchant Gilds had to deal. Thus we hear of a dispute between the farriers and the smiths because of " encroachments " on one another's trade.

" Many dayes and yeares they were at variance and ayther craft trubled other, and yearly took and held distress of other, so that many mayors and the Chamber was hugely vext with them."

At length the mayor gets them to submit their points of quarrel to four arbitrators from other gilds, and a " ful accordement " is the result.

Not one of the least of their duties was the setting forth each year of the " Miracle Plays " or *Mysteries* (*mester*: L. *ministerium*, a trade or occupation), by which the mediæval citizen received at the same time instruction, amusement, and occupation. Plays on a huge scale, on movable scaffolds, and dealing with the whole of the Old and New Testament narrative in brief, dramatic scenes with both very touching and very comic additions, they gave a unity of interest as well as a means of expression that must have had a profound influence in promoting the corporate life of the town. Their production was a serious matter, and the gild who defaulted with its play or performed it badly was heavily fined " for the dishonour done to our citie." In the days of Henry VIII., when the fate of the gilds was trembling in the balance, we find one time-serving corporation complaining of their burden and expense ; but since they brought an immense amount of strangers, trade, and custom to the burghers, such an objection to the payment of the " Pageant penny " could not have been universal.

The plays themselves are a most interesting development of the " liturgical plays," by which the Church, from the sixth century onwards, strove to satisfy her children's instinct for the dramatic representation of familiar themes. Their story must be read elsewhere, but we may notice here that, though frowned upon by Reformation divines, they were performed up to and during the reign of James I., who saw, with Gondomar,

the Spanish legate, and thousands of others, a Passion Play at St Ethelreda's, Ely Place, somewhere between 1620 and 1628. Their only survival is in our Lord Mayor's Show, and even that is a heritage of the pageant for which London, even in Reformation days, was famous, rather than of the mediæval mystery play.

The Fairs—In the hands of the gilds, which, it must be remembered, comprised every tradesman of the town, would be the management of the yearly fairs, the opportunity for buying foreign goods and laying in a stock of raw material or finished goods for future use. We read in contemporary records of the Great Fair at Winchester, granted to the bishop, since Winchester had grown up as a "monastic town," by Henry II., to be held for sixteen days.

On August 31st, very early in the morning, the bishop's officers proclaimed the fair from the hill-top, and then, riding through the city, received the keys at the gates and took formal possession of the wool-weighing machine in the wool-market. They then rode back with the mayor to a great tent on the hill, where a special mayor, bailiff, and coroner—to represent the king—were elected to govern the city during fair-time.

The hill itself would be covered with wooden shops or booths, amongst which we see dark-skinned merchants from the East, and others from Flanders, Caen, and Bristol. A wooden palisade guards the entrance to the mushroom town, for tolls are strictly levied on all who buy or sell, though some try to evade the latter by burrowing under the wall! All purchases must be made here, for nothing but food may be sold within a seven-league circuit.

Disputes are frequent among such a motley throng, and are settled by the "Court of pie-powder" (*pied-poudre*, Angl.: "dusty feet"). Sometimes we find a bit of trickery to escape the tolls, and the merchants try to linger till the fair is over before doing business. This is strictly forbidden by the bishop in 1301, "under pain of excommunication."

The fate of the gilds was sealed by their religious character at the Reformation period; but long before that time there were certain elements within them that spoke of decay. The very strictness of their own rules led to a form of tyranny in their midst that was bound to react on themselves. It was a small matter and praiseworthy enough that members should be excluded who had dirty hands or "blue" nails, or who hawked their wares in the street, to the lowering of the prestige of their order. But such petty restrictions multiplied, and were often the cause of bitter strife between the Merchant Gilds, which strove to rule unchecked, and the Trade Gilds, which were soon quite strong enough to claim independence.

Moreover, no stranger, however expert at his craft, might settle among them; and thus, though they were for many a long year the "safeguard of honest work and well-regulated trade," the absence of any form of competition or limitation of the power of the gilds made them an autocracy in themselves, and was quite alien from the spirit of social freedom which had been their earlier aim. Wider markets, the use of "capital" in place of "connection," a more uncertain demand for their goods, also tended to their downfall. Chaucer shows us four of these gildsmen among the Canterbury pilgrims, all wearing the badge of the religious, but not of the trade gild to which each belonged:

> "An Haberdasshere and a Carpenter,
> A Webbe, a Dyer and a Tapycer—
> And they were clothed all in one liverie
> Of a solempne and greet fraternity.
> Ful fresshe and newe their geere apikèd was; . . .
> Wel seemed eche of them a fair burgeys,
> To sitten in a gelde hall on a deys.
> Everich, for the wisdom that he kan
> Was shapeley for to been an alderman,
> For catel had they enogh and rente."

Apprentices—One of the outcomes of the gilds was the system of apprentices which we find taken for granted in the gild rules as early as 1300, when we read that

" The Brothers and Sisters are forbidden to entice away each others' apprentices."

The apprenticeship of boys for seven years to a particular craft was the one path to free membership of a gild and an important means of keeping that membership select. The lad must be of free birth, born in lawful wedlock, " neither deformed nor alien." He was given instruction, board, and maintenance. The enrolment was a solemn affair. On the Court Day master and prentice came before the Brethren, and if no objections were raised, the name of the boy was enrolled in the gild books. Seven years later he appeared again, demanding freedom, while his master gave witness that he had given good service. There was a close personal relation between the two. The boy promised " good conduct and civility, abstention from cards and dice and haunting of taverns."

The master might " correct " the apprentice with a rod, but there was an appeal to the gild if the boy was unmanageable or the master too severe.

There were many curious by-laws in connection with the system. The ironmongers will not allow the prentices' hair to be worn too long. At Colchester no prentice is to enter a tavern on a Sunday. The Merchant Taylors fine a master 5s. " for unlawfully beating his prentice," and another 10s. for clothing his boy ill " to the great disgrace of the maisterie," (mester or trade).

The apprentice system was the one mediæval survival that the Tudors tried to keep, but the loss of the gilds meant the end of the machinery that kept the system going. In something of the same form they existed under the great Trade Companies that took the place of the gilds, but the merry prentice boys, with their games and their quarrels and their " crying of wares," never again played the same part in town life.

Growth of London—While we are thinking of the development of mediæval towns, we cannot fail to want to know something of the growth of the chief city of our land ; and as London grew up neither round a monastery nor a feudal castle, we may take it as typical of the third

class of towns, which developed as a sheer necessity of trade conditions.

In Saxon days the River Thames wound through swampy marshland from Blackwall to Mortlake, and was overhung at one point by a cliff rising some twenty-five feet high. On the east side of the "Wall brook," as it was afterwards called, rose two little hills, formerly the sites of a British fortress and a Roman forum and basilica. The river was crossed by a ferry, much used by merchants in Roman times; and owing to the importance of the trade brought by them, the first beginnings of a city spread east to what was later the Tower, west to Fleet Street, and to some extent northwards, though barred in that direction by the dreary swamps and wastes that stretched to the forest heights of Hampstead, Highgate, and Epping.

This thriving port was probably deserted when the Saxons invaded this land, for we hear of no battle there. As usual the newcomers avoided a place they regarded as the "handwork of giants," and gradually the original inhabitants would creep back and settle down again, reinforced by foreign traders and later by such of the conquering race as had lost their dread of walled towns.

In the year 604 London was the seat of a bishop, Mellitus by name, and a flourishing port full of ships. Before long it was famous for its numerous churches, with their dedications to such Roman saints as Peter, Paul, and Michael. But the changing history of the place is presently seen in other churches dedicated to St Ethelburga, wife of the first Christian king of the East Saxons; to St Botolph, the favourite Saxon patron of cripples; to St Erkenwald, the episcopal builder of Bishop-gate; all showing how the Saxon element was taking root in the city. Later on, churches dedicated to St Olaf and St Magnus remind us of the fierce fight in which Alfred first drove off the Danes from "Lundenbyrig" and finally had to give up to them the city.

London was always rather a port than a fortress,

though the White Tower possibly dates from the Conqueror's days; and the city received William in peace save for a brief scuffle, dearly atoned for, between Saxon citizens and Norman soldiers. This was while William was being crowned in the great Abbey of Westminster, founded by Edward the Confessor, round whose walls grew up a separate city in the century to come.

The Norman Fitz-Stephen, secretary to Archbishop Thomas in the twelfth century, tells us that after the great fire of 1135, which destroyed most of this older London, the rebuilt city possessed a Cathedral, thirteen large conventual churches, a hundred and twenty-six parish churches, and several large hospitals, of which Bartholomew's, founded by the romantic figure of Rahere, minstrel, fine gentleman, and pilgrim, was one.

The walls of the city were then complete except on the river side, leaving Chancery Lane and Holborn as suburbs, with large gardens, meadows, and watermills behind them.

The Chepe, now Cheapside, was the chief market, filled each market day with booths and sheds; and from thence the streets leading out were named from the produce sold in them, such as Milk Street, Bread Street, or Poultry.

Round this part the gilds had their particular abodes, and you would find the shoemaker cobbling in Cordwainer Street, under the sign of the Three Goats' Heads; the rosary makers in Paternoster Row, Ave Maria Lane, and Amen Corner, and craftsmen busily plying their trade in Ironmonger Lane.

Outside the walls of the city stood Smithfield, famous for its great horse fair, and also the space where the London prentices went forth to sport on summer evenings when their work was done.

Above the city, on the top of Ludgate Hill, brooded the great Cathedral Church of Old St Paul's.

Over the whole of what is now known as St Paul's Churchyard it stretched, as far as Paternoster Row, and

included the palace of the bishop, a chapter-house, and a charnel-house which afterwards was turned into a very beautiful cloister.

In the aisles of the church merchants met to drive a bargain, burghers discussed the news of the day, and children played till the fifteenth century, when a proclamation declares that "no manere of man nor child, of what estate or condition that he be, be so hardie (as) to wrestle within the Seintuary ne the boundes of Paulles, ne in none other open place within the Citie of London."

By the year 1302 we find the houses of the city beginning to be tiled instead of thatched; for in that year a certain Thomas Bat binds himself to indemnify the city from danger by fire, owing to his house being thatched, and promises to have it tiled by Pentecost. The following picture of London from the pen of a fifteenth-century writer gives a good idea of the mediæval city:—

"Then to the Chepe I began me drawne
Where much people I saw for to stand;
One offered me velvet, silk and lawne,
Another he taketh me by the hand;
'Here is Paris thread, the finest in the land.'

. . . . . .

Then went I forth by London Stone
Throughout all Canwick Street;
Drapers much cloth me offered anon,
Then comes one cried, 'Hot sheeps' feet!'
One cried 'Mackerel,' 'Rushes Green' another gan greet:
One bade me buy a hood to cover my head,
But for want of money I might not be sped.
Then fast I hied me into East Chepe:
One cried 'Ribs of Beef,' and many 'a pie'
Pewter pots they clattered in a heap:
There was pipe, harp and minstrelsy. . . .

. . . . . .

Then unto Cornhill I yode,
Where was much stolen gear among,
I saw where hung mine very own hood
That I had lost among the throng!

LYDGATE'S *Picture of London.*

Exercises

1. Find out and record anything you can about the growth of a town in which you take some special interest.

2. Give some arguments for and against the revival of the Gild System. What conditions of modern life have completely changed since their days ?

3. Describe a visit to thirteenth-century London.

Chapter VIII

THE AGRICULTURAL PROBLEMS OF LABOUR, PESTILENCE, AND REVOLT

A.D. 1300–1400

IT has been said that the fourteenth century shows in many respects the beginning of modern life. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the change that began to take place in that period is the revolt of the villein or peasant, in consequence of the new spirit that was fast invading England.

A Change of Spirit—It was inevitable that so enlightened a century as the thirteenth would have the effect of an increase of intelligence in every rank of the population; and it only needed that men should begin to think for themselves for them to assert their rights. Feudalism had had its day, and was already beginning to decline. From the great landholder, power was passing into the hands of the tradesman and the merchant. Problems of capital and labour, trade and taxation, agriculture and commerce were beginning to exercise men's minds.

The old cosmopolitan spirit, too, was beginning to pass into a more insular feeling. We see it in the speech of the people. "Not one in a hundred of unlearned men can understand French books," says a fourteenth-century writer; and in 1362 even Parliament was opened with an English speech. Towards the end of the fourteenth century the London dialect (East Midland) became, as was only natural, the common speech of the English people, and the genius of Chaucer stamped it as the literary language of the land. It only remained for Caxton, as we shall see in a future chapter, to give

it the wide circulation of his printing press to make its future certain.

Other elements were not lacking by which the hitherto widely separated ranks of the people were drawn together. We see in the pages of Froissart peasant and prince, artisan and merchant, knight and yeoman fighting side by side on the fields of France. We see the beginnings of sea power in such a battle as that of Sluys, depending no less on the son of the villein than on the knight, when the fighting is done with poleaxe and spear, when great stones, timber, pots of burning lime are thrown on the foe, and peas are poured upon the deck to cause them to tumble overboard.

We see the fields of Crecy won, not by knight or baron, but by the sturdy yeoman of England with his long bow. "The might of England standeth most upon archers who be no rich men," says Fortescue; and many of the thirty thousand who accompanied Richard II. in his expedition to Ireland must have been villeins, men of the soil. It was but natural that the makers of the armour and of the guns then newly coming into use should develop some spirit of independence. Moreover, it was the growing middle class who financed the war, and not the nobles.

Before we study the effect of the Great Pestilence, which was to do in a few months what these other tendencies were slowly bringing about through many a long year, let us try to be quite clear as to the position of the English agricultural labourer in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Position of the Labourer.—We have seen how, from the eleventh century, rural England was divided into a number of agricultural communities called manors, with a baron or abbot at their head. Some of these manors contained a few freeholders, who were subject to the lord's jurisdiction, gave voluntary military service, but held land without obligations except that of rent. The majority of the inhabitants, however, were unfree, and held their land "in villeinage."

This meant that the "villein," or peasant, owned certain strips of land on the demesne in return for services which served as rent. Thus a peasant holding thirty acres would work for three days a week on the lord's demesne with his own teams of cattle; he would give extra time—"boon days"—at harvest and spring sowing; he would also make payments in kind, such as wax, poultry, eggs. Beneath him in rank was the *cottar*, who held only a small strip of land, probably just the garden round the cottage, and worked for the peasant. He became in later days the agricultural labourer proper, when the peasant had developed into the small farmer and, outside England, into the peasant proprietor.

The "home farm" of the lord of the manor had its own permanent servants, paid in wool and food and milk. The peasants worked on the scattered strips of land in open fields, divided only by "low balks of unploughed turf," of which fields one-third was left fallow every year.

The peasant had no civil rights. The lord was actually his owner, and no court would listen to any villein's claim against his overlord. The amount of his day's work and even of the kind and quantity of food he ate were prescribed for him; he could not leave the place of his birth; and it took all the energy of Archbishop Thomas Becket to throw out a clause of the Constitutions of Clarendon which forbad a serf to receive Holy Orders without his lord's consent.

On the other hand, it was by no means a state of pure slavery under which he lived. He had an independent home life, certain rights of property; he could not be sold away from his holding. He had also rights of "common land," and might graze his beasts freely over stubble and fallow fields. His, moreover, were the universal conditions of West and Central Europe in the thirteenth century, from which he was to emerge in France and Germany as the peasant proprietor. In England, however, the land remained in the hands of a comparatively small number of owners, and hence a large estate with

several inhabitants included many villages belonging to the same lord; and all the inhabitants were dependent on that one landowner.

This accounts for the fact that in the West of England, where the land was mainly pasture, and fertility depended rather on rainfall than labour, we find tiny hamlets and scattered farms instead of the large and substantial villages of the south and east.

Now the years between 1200 and 1350 are marked by an increase in population, the growth of towns, and a corresponding growth in trade. Near the ports and towns there was good money to be got, whereas in agriculture nothing more was aimed at than a bare subsistence. So the villeins began to offer money to the lord instead of services, and the lord used it to employ hired labour.

This change is especially marked near large towns, harbours, places of pilgrimage, markets, and monasteries. In the latter days of serfdom in Scotland the monks did much to better the lot of the bondmen attached to their lands and to bring about their freedom, with definite services and payments.

Services with teams of cattle were first sold, and later hand labour. The cottar, or the landless younger son of a freeholder, took the place of the villein, and thus the class of agricultural labourer began to appear.

Wages—In the thirteenth century we find the bailiff hiring labourers by the year. Men were paid threepence a day, women a penny, boys a halfpenny. Women did most of the hoeing of the land and did piecework at harvest-time, much at the same rates as the men. Labourers began to move about from place to place where work was plentiful.

All this points to a big movement towards the modern ideas of employment and labour, since a fairly large part of the population was being gradually emancipated, and a new class of labourers began, though slowly, to be employed. Even a succession of bad harvests between 1315 and 1321, with much distress and loss of life, only

tended to cause an increase in wages for reaping, mowing, thatching. Later on came a period of prosperity, with good harvests and cheap produce; and we find an increase in the employment of women, who are engaged in reaping, hoeing, bean planting, and washing sheep, at a penny a day.

Serfdom—In spite of this movement towards freedom, it must be clearly recognized that the conditions of serfdom still existed in the thirteenth as in the eleventh century, and had never been repealed, though certain mitigations appear. Thus in an old document of 1181 we have the following: (i) No man can buy his liberty with his own money, and even if he had paid the price he can be recalled to villeinage by his lord. (ii) If any serf shall dwell unclaimed for a year and a day in a chartered town so that he hath been received into the community or gild of that town as a citizen, that fact shall free him from villeinage.

Even in the thirteenth century, though actual slavery no longer existed, a villein could be sold with the land. We find one Gunyora de la Mare giving to the monks of Eynsham a half hide of land held by Roger the Palmer, "together with the same Roger and all his brood."

Moreover, the peasants and small freeholders had to pay pretty heavily for quite ordinary rights. The manor rolls at Cambridge in 1325 have the following significant entries:—

"Expenses of 6 men going about the country and to London to seek stolen oxen for 6 days, 1/4. *Given to the king's servants lest they do greater damage*, 8*d*.

"1347. To the servants of Lionel of Antwerp, the king's son, that they might not seize our corn, 2/1."

Again, at Gamlingay in 1281, a serf pays to Lord Robert Fitzwalter 10s. for a licence to give his own daughter in marriage. Another pays the same for leave to "promote his son William to Holy Orders."

In 1359; "Edyth at Sherde pays 5/- for licence to marry and quit the manor."

The Black Death—Ten years before this last entry there had fallen upon England a pestilence of unexampled horror, which had a very important effect upon what we may term the " manorial system."

One of the manorial customs was that if a tenant died, the lord claimed some live stock as *heriot* when the land passed to his son. But if he died without heirs, the land *escheated*, *i.e.* went back to the possession of the lord.

Now when we find in one single year (1351) more than half the population of East Anglia swept away by the Black Death, it is clear that, since as a rule whole families succumbed together, a large amount of land must have reverted to the overlord, and a great demand for extra labour became the rule. But where was the labour to come from ?

The mortality all over England was extraordinary, but it is owing to the special researches of Canon Jessop that we have details most fully of Norfolk and Suffolk. He tells us that the Court of Cornard Parva, near Sudbury, records fifty tenants of whom nine died in the first two months of the year, fifteen in the next two, thirty-six in the next six. In a single year more than eight hundred Norfolk parishes lost their parsons. He shows us the great cemetery near Norwich Cathedral choked with the dead, and the heroic Bishop Bateman toiling in the midst of the horror, filling up vacant cures at the rate of one hundred in twenty days. At the Augustine Priory at Heveringland the prior and canons all died, as did the whole settlement of Franciscan friars at Norwich, busy to the last in attending the sick and dying.

In 1349 Parliament was prorogued *sine die* " because the deadly pestilence in Westminster and in the City of London and other places thereabouts was increasing with extraordinary severity."

The number (800) of beneficed clergy, as well as friars, and the nineteen religious houses in Norfolk and Suffolk which succumbed, speaks for itself. The sick flocked to them for aid, and the mediæval priest, be he monk,

friar, or parson, was not found wanting at his post of danger. But the result of such mortality was dire in its effect.

"It was from this cause," says Wadding, "that the monastic bodies, and especially the mendicant orders, which up to this time had been flourishing in virtue and learning, began to decline, and discipline to become slack, as well as from the loss of eminent men as from the relaxation of the rules, in consequence of the pitiable calamities of the time. And it was in vain to look for reform among the young men and among the promiscuous multitude who were received without the necessary discrimination.[1] For they thought more of filling the empty houses than of restoring the former strictness."

Effect of the Great Pestilence—Still more marked was the effect upon the condition of the peasants, the greatest sufferers by the Black Death. Labour became extremely scarce, and never had there been a greater demand for it. "Women and even children were to be seen with the plough and leading wagons." The lord, hard hit himself by the scarcity of corn in the neglected fields, tried to obtain labourers at the old rate of pay; others tried to enforce service upon those who had become used to pay rent in money. Where possible the villein escaped to another town or manor, where he could sell his labour.

In the very thick of the miseries caused by the plague, both in 1349 and 1351, ordinances and statutes declared that all able-bodied persons under sixty years of age were to be compelled to work under pain of imprisonment for the wages current before the Black Death. This was the beginning of the long conflict which resulted in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381.

Put briefly, the standing quarrel in those years between 1351 and 1381 resolved itself into this. There were two classes of agricultural workmen—the villein who held

[1] The records show that after the death of this large number of priests, many laymen who had lost their wives took Holy Orders. The same thing probably happened in the case of the religious houses.

his strip or strips of land on condition of "dues" and service, and the landless man who lived by selling his labour. From the villein the lord now wished to exact all customary dues, from the landless man he wished to buy his labour at the lowest possible rate. On his side the villein wanted to be quit of customary labour dues, and to become a tenant at a fixed and moderate rent; and the landless man determined to get something more than the miserable pittance allowed by the law.

Statute of Labourers—The side of the landowner is best expressed in the first Statute of Labourers in the reign of Edward III.:

"Because a great part of the people, and especially of workmen and servants late died of the Pestilence, and many (seeing the necessity of Masters and the great scarcity of Servants) will not serve unless they get excessive wages, and some are willing to beg in Idleness rather than by Labour get their Living, we . . . have ordained, etc."

The poet Gower, some twenty years later, also states what we may call the aristocratic view:

"The world goeth fast from bad to worse when shepherd and cowherd demand more for their labour than the master bailiff was wont to take in days gone by. . . . Labourers of old were not wont to eat of wheaten bread: their meat was of beans or coarser corn and their drink of water alone. Cheese and milk were a feast to them, and rarely ate they of other dainties. Their dress was of hodden grey. Then was the world ordered aright for folk of this sort."

We find also a curious note of warning sounded by a priest in 1381, when revolt against these conditions was on the point of breaking out:

"John Schap, sometime priest of York and now of Colchester, greeteth well John Nameless and John Miller and John Carter, and biddeth them beware of guile in borough and stand together in God's name. . . ., and biddeth Piers Plowman go to his work and chasten well Hob the Robber.

> 'John the Miller hath ground small, small, small ;
> The King's Son of Heaven shall pay for all.
> Beware or ye be woe,
> Know your friends from your foe,
> Have enough, and say hoe !
> And do well and better and flee sin
> And seek peace and hold you therein.' "

But the days of peace were gone, for the spirit of bitterness against autocracy was everywhere found.

" God speed the plough ! " cries the peasant. " Yes, for we maintain the whole world. The parson comes to us for his tithe of sheaves, the king's purveyors for wheat, oats, beef, mutton, butter, and poultry to be delivered at Court. We have to pay the ' fifteenth ' and the ' greenwax ' (taxes) beside our rent. Everyone wants something from us—prisoners, clerics, friars, preachers, priests, scholars, minstrels, beggars. You may well say, ' God speed the plough ! ' "

Condition of the Labourers—In the pages of *Piers Plowman*, that bitter mediæval satire on the abuses of the day, we get a pitiable picture of the condition of the labourer. Clothed in tattered rags, his hood full of holes, his toes stick out of his knobbed shoes. Four weak heifers stagger in front of his plough—their ribs can be counted. His wife drives them on with a long goad. She is wrapped in a short coat, and her bare feet leave tracks of blood. Her ragged babe lies in the harvest bowl ; " and all sang one song that was pitiful to hear ; all cried one cry, a care-full note."

Mingled with this cry of woe we get a sterner tone. In a political poem of the day, " Richard the Redeless " says plainly that " rulers of realms were not made to live as they liked, but to labour at the law as the poor man does at the plough " ; and " Piers Plowman " reflects the feeling of the people against a despotic king when he declares, " The might of the common people made him to reign."

Not only the oppression of the labouring classes, but the growing wealth and still more the sense of high ideals and ambitions that were pervading the middle

classes, tended to overthrow the old system of repression by the landed proprietor. And as at that very time the barons were themselves in revolt against the rule of Richard II., one may easily see why those years that followed Wat Tyler's rebellion of 1381 were seething with unrest.

Influence of Friars—Not only did John Ball preach open socialism in Kent, but the teaching of the Friars, both Dominican and Franciscan, was all in the direction of a more socialistic spirit, and their influence was still very strong in England. The actual facts form a curious contrast to Chaucer's picture of the "Frere," who was "well-beloved and familiar with franklins over all in his country . . . but had not with sick lazars acquaintance." On the contrary we find the Friars invariably on the side of the poor man against the rich, and openly accused by contemporary writers of being responsible for the rebellion.

Thus in 1387 we see the Dominican Friar Preachers trying to set up a kind of Trades Union against the rich merchants of the gilds. We find in the great Book of the Gilds that "three serving men were brought up before the Gild of Cordwainers, and accused that they together with their accomplices did, on the Feast of the Assumption at the Friars Preachers in the City of London, bring together a great congregation of men like unto themselves, and did conspire to hold together, to the damage of the commonalty and prejudice of the trade before mentioned and in rebellion against the overseers of the gild. And the said persons could not deny the same, and confessed that a certain Friar Preacher, Brother William Barton, had encouraged them." These men were all sent to Newgate Prison.

Wyclif—The influence on the revolt of Wyclif, another type of reformer, has been overrated. When he preached on the text, "All lordship is granted by God in return for service to Himself," he is in agreement with the friars, whom he hated; but the rebels' most bitter attack was upon John of Gaunt, his friend and supporter. Even his followers, the Lollards, never became leaders of

the people, though their attack on an unpopular war, on capital punishment, and trade in luxuries added large numbers to their ranks round about the year 1390. But eleven years later their wild socialism had overshot its mark, and the Parliament of the day was quite prepared to pass the Act of Heretics, which was aimed at their extermination.

Changes in Condition of the Peasants—More important than the actual revolt of Wat Tyler itself in 1381 was the quiet obstinacy with which the peasant withdrew his absolutely essential services, and either fled from the manor at risk of branding and imprisonment, or bought his freedom. Gradually it became the custom rather than the exception to receive a money rent in place of service, because otherwise the lord could not keep his tenants, and a steady flow of population began towards the town. By the middle of the fifteenth century the "manorial system" had broken up, "labour dues" had almost disappeared, and the peasant was at liberty to realize his own personal dignity and independence.

Then other changes began to take place. In the hands of labourers receiving a fair wage work became more efficient. Their whole time could be devoted to it instead of a grudging three days a week. On the other hand, the need of ready money rather than love of land led the big landowners to let portions of their *demesne*, often to their bailiff or reeve. The payment for the land was called the *ferm*; the new owner became the *fermer*, or farmer, and ancestor of the modern farmer class. Chaucer paints for us the portrait of this representative of a rapidly increasing middle class. "He could keep well garner and bin; no auditor could get the better of him; he knew by the drought and the rain what would be the yielding of his seed and grain. Full rich he was in private store; he knew how to buy better than his lord."

So far the fourteenth century and the years that immediately followed it had seen, to some extent, the triumph of the peasants, although traces of the villeinage

system are to be found far into the sixteenth century. But the real blow to the class of small landholders was yet to come.

Exercises

1. What changes in social spirit occurred in the fourteenth century? Compare them with anything of a similar character in modern times.
2. Sketch the history of the agricultural labourer up to the fifteenth century. State what you consider is his present position in social history.
3. What were the main effects of the Black Death?

Chapter IX

ON THE ROAD IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

A.D. 1300–1400

FEW things illustrate better many of the social changes that were taking place in the fourteenth century than a journey by road through mediæval England.

London in the Fourteenth Century—Let us suppose ourselves setting out, one fine day, from the heart of London town. Passing from Blackfriars, the home of the Dominicans, to London Bridge, we notice a change in the houses, many of which are built of stone and brick instead of mud and timber. Some of them now have an upper story of one sleeping-room, the " solar " as it was called, instead of the single room on the ground floor. Outside the door stands the booth loaded with goods, some of which are hung from the window above. Overhead swings the " sign " of the shopkeeper—a golden fleece for the wool merchant, the golden ball or the " Three Kings " of the mercer, the dragon of the apothecary, the unicorn of the goldsmith. These had to be hung at least nine feet above the street, so as not to impede the progress of mounted men. No footpaths are seen, but two " canals " or kennels lie on either side of the street, sloped to a ridge, and into these the housewife throws her slops or the shopkeeper his refuse. Taverns, with the bush hung above them, are frequent, and the ale dispensed was still made by the " alewife " on the spot. If she watered the ale too much her fate was to stand in the pillory at Westcheap to be pelted by the mob with mud and bad eggs. The smoke of the houses still ascends through holes in the roof, though the windows are some-

times of glass, and a Gild of Glaziers had already won its charter in the days of Edward III.

Now we come to London Bridge, that " wonder of the world," originally a ferry between what is now Dowgate Dock and St Saviour's Dock. The legend goes that there was a bridge here in the days of Ethelred the Unready, to which Olaf the Norwegian, the St Olave of the church hard by, moored his ships when attacking the Danes in Southwark. Stow, however, says that Mary, daughter of the ferryman, built St Mary Overies, a nunnery, on the south side of the river, which later on became a college of priests. These are said to have built, early in the twelfth century, the first wooden bridge across the river, closed at one end by the city gate; and about that time two Norman knights founded—or re-founded—at its southern end St Saviour's Priory, of which the chancel, two transepts, and the Lady Chapel remain to this day. This timber bridge was swept away by the great storm of 1091, but was rebuilt at once. In 1135 it was burnt, and again rebuilt. But in 1176, when everyone was tired of constantly rebuilding the wooden structure, the priest, Peter Colechurch, built during thirty-three years a mighty bridge of stone, over the longest pier of which he placed a chapel dedicated to St Thomas of Canterbury. It had houses with pointed roofs overhanging the river, and towers of defence, and all England was proud to send money towards its erection and maintenance. In the fourteenth century shops were built on either side, except in the middle, where was the drawbridge, where tolls were exacted on " foreign merchants " passing up the river. From London Bridge we can take our choice of roads, either the great highway to the west, which would take us by way of Winchester to Exeter, or that which leads to Canterbury and ultimately to Dover.

The latter attracts us most, for, in spite of the ill reputation borne by Southwark, the refuge of the rascals who are driven out of the city across the Bridge, we see a goodly company enough preparing to start from the Tabard Inn. Already some of them have ridden on

as far as the Watering of St Thomas, a brook near the second milestone on the Canterbury Road, and as we can hire a horse at the rate of twelve pence to Rochester, and another for the same price on to Canterbury, we follow at a distance sufficient to give us a good chance of inspecting them.

The Pilgrims—Leading the group of pilgrims, for such they evidently are, we see a knight riding a good horse, and wearing a folded head covering, a red undercoat beneath his dark tunic, with armour on his legs, and gilt spurs. His hauberk is still soiled from the journey he has just finished, for he has been winning great renown in Spain.

> " He never yet no villainy ne sayde
> In all his lyfe, unto no manner wight.
> He was a verray parfit, gentil knyght."

Next to him rides his son, a young squire, with well-curled hair, under a high blue cap, and a short green coat with long, wide sleeves. He wears white breeches with tufts of ermine here and there, and pointed shoes, and as to his jacket—

> "Embroidered was he as it were a meede
> All full of fresshé floures whyte and reede."

The two are followed by a sturdy yeoman with a nut-brown face and a coat and hood of green. He wears a sheaf of peacock arrows under his belt, a gay dagger, and a brooch in the form of a figure of St Christopher, the patron saint of foresters. From his leathern girdle hangs a horn.

Then comes a little company of nuns and priests. The first nun is a prioress, a lady of rank, perhaps from the Benedictine nunnery of Bromley, near Stratford-le-Bow, where she had been educated. She wears a neatly pinched wimple and a handsome black cloak over a white tunic.

A stout monk comes next, riding a horse that has often seen a good hunt, and is followed by two grey hounds. He is by no means a lover of poverty, as is seen by the fur upon his sleeves and the gold pin that fastens his

hood. And next him rides a merry-faced friar, with a cheery word for everyone and a fine voice for a song.

> " His eyén twinkled in his head aryht
> As doon the sterrés in a frosty night."

A little way behind him rides a merchant with a forked beard, wearing a " motley dress " of red lined with blue, embroidered with blue and white flowers, and boots with very long, slender toes. He is a Merchant of the Staple, which fixed the town or towns in which the " staple " products of England, such as wool, hides, and tin might be sold to foreigners. At this time the Staple had been moved lately from Calais to Middleburgh, on the island of Walcheren, so that he is anxiously wondering if the sea is being " well kept," since he has to transport his merchandise across it.

A great contrast to him is a thin youth, wearing a threadbare cloak and riding a very lean horse. He hails from Oxford, where he has to live on the alms of charitable people.

> " Of study took he moost cure and moost hede,
> Noght a word spake he mooré than was need."

Behind him ride a sergeant-at-law, a barrister, and a landed proprietor, held in good repute at the Parvys, or portico, of St Paul's Cathedral, where lawyers were wont to meet at midday for consultations with their clients. He wears a scarlet robe with open sleeves, faced with blue and ornamented with stripes, and on his shoulders is a white furred hood.

By his side rides a franklin, a free tenant of the Crown, holding his lands without obligation of military service or rent. He is a rich man, keeping open house for all the countryside, with large fishponds and mews attached to his estate ; and he has acted as chairman of the sessions, representative of the shire in Parliament, and sheriff of his county. His white beard hangs over a red surcoat lined with blue and trimmed with stripes of fringe. He is talking business to five gildsmen—a haberdasher, carpenter, weaver, dyer, and carpet-maker, who, though of different craft gilds, wear the badge of the religious society to

which all belong. They are well-to-do, solid tradesmen, and inclined to keep in his place a rascally-looking cook whom they have brought with them to cook their favourite meal of pie and " mortreux "—meat crushed in a mortar with milk, eggs, spices, and coloured with saffron.

A sunburnt sailor from the West Country comes next, on a very poor horse, which he rides very ill, and is followed by a grave-faced doctor of physic, wearing a rich gown of blood-red lined with blue-grey taffetas and thin silk. He carries a large flask, the emblem of his profession, but his learning is not only in anatomy and drugs. He knows all the ancient lore of astrology, and studies the planets so that he may know exactly the right moment to apply a remedy. He is skilful too in making talismans and applying them at the most propitious time—images of falcons cut on a topaz, or of a lion engraved on gold as a preservative against disease.

After this reverend person, but some distance off, rides a vulgar dame from Bath, wearing a big shovel hat, a red gown, a blue " footmantle " (a loose trouser) and red hose, with well-blacked shoes. She knows all that is to be known of cloth-making, for she comes from the chief cloth-manufacturing district and from the town where the great cloth fair is held. Even the skilled workmen from Ypres and Ghent can teach her nothing. She is a person of importance in her own town, and can boast of having been thrice at Jerusalem on pilgrimage, besides Rome, Bologna, Compostella, and Cologne. These she describes with much liveliness of detail to a priest riding by her side, dressed in a shabby red cassock. He has a gentle face, full of thought and devotion.

> " He was also a lernéd man, a clerk,
> . . . . . .
> Wyde was his parish and houses fer asunder,
> But he no lefté that for regn ne thunder.
> A better priest I trowe that nowheer now is."

Like many another parish priest, especially when these grew scarce after the Black Death, he is not of high birth. His brother, a ploughman, rides by his side, wearing a

tabard or sleeveless smock-frock. He is a good and kindly fellow, for

> "He woldé thresshe, and thereto dyke and delve
> For Cristés sake, for every pouré wight
> Withouten hire, if it lay in his might."

He is not one of those peasants who would have joined in the revolt, for he loves "lyving in free and parfit charitie."

The last little group of riders consists of a stout miller, wearing a white coat and a blue hood, and blowing lustily upon his bagpipes; and with him a manciple, or servant of a college or inns of court, whose duty it is to buy provisions at the direction of the steward. The "temple" to which this one belongs is one of the two "Inns of Court"—the Inner or Middle Temple which then occupied the old buildings of the Knights Templars in the Strand. He wears a blue coat with red lining, and tries to talk to a reeve, or bailiff, who lags behind the rest, a "slender, choleric man," whose task it is to look after the rents, cattle, and goods of the lord of the manor.

More sociable seems a certain "Summoner," or bishop's officer, who has to deal in the ecclesiastical court with sins such as witchcraft, usury, neglect of the sacraments, or refusal to pay tithes; he is busy comparing notes with a pardoner, riding bareheaded, and singing as he went. He was a "clerk in minor orders," and carries a cross in his hand. In days when the Church imposed a heavy penance, such as a long fast, for mortal sins, men were allowed sometimes to substitute for this penance a sum of money for some charitable purpose, such as helping to build or repair a church; and "pardoners" were the officials sent about the country to collect this money. They were therefore a kind of authorized alms-collector. They were hated by the parish priests, who complained that they collected money that should have gone to them in tithes.

Lastly, as they file past us we catch a glimpse of a slender little man with shy eyes, "ever staring upon the ground," but seeing more than most people, nevertheless,

as he rides pensively along with a quill pen sticking out of his wallet. It is Dan Chaucer in a sober dress and hood of black, with small forked beard and dreamy face. He seems to be listening to the chatter of his companions as he rides among them ; and his is the magic by which he has made his Canterbury pilgrims live for us as vividly as they did six centuries ago.

As they pass beyond our view we notice other sights strange enough to modern eyes. Here along the stony road runs an outlaw, leaving a blood-stained track behind him, wearing only a torn shirt and grasping a wooden cross. If he reaches the shore he may yet get across seas. But if he lose the cross he holds, he may be slain by any man.

He may possibly be the same as the criminal we saw yesterday fleeing to sanctuary. If he got to the Church of St Sepulchre or St Bride he would knock at the door with the great ring that hangs thereon, upon which the bell in the tower would be rung, and he would be received into the sanctuary. There, having confessed his crime, he would be allowed to sit upon the " peace chair " in safety. Sometimes his enemies beset him there so closely that he could not get food; and early in the century a statute has to be made which permits him to leave by a certain port within a fixed time, " carrying a cross in his hand and going not out of the king's highway neither on the right hand nor on the left."

Here comes a leper, carrying his own cup and the clapper wherewith he is obliged to give notice of his approach. You will have seen in some of these mediæval churches the hole in the wall through which he made his confession, and the " lepers' squint " through which he was allowed to see Mass celebrated without entering the church.

As it grows dusk the little companies of wayfarers draw together, for in the thick undergrowth and wooded copses lurk " sturdy robbers ready to rob the unwary. We should do well to hasten on to the hostelry at Rochester, or to the nearest priory, or even to the Pilgrims'

House at Ospringe, where we shall be sure of hospitality for one night.

In days when there was no post and no newspaper, it is evident that the news of the country, the topics discussed in Parliament, in "castle, cloister, or market-place," must have been carried from place to place by wayfarers.

Roads—Yet travel was no easy matter in those days. The country was still intersected by the great roads made by the Romans, and called *highways* because they were raised above the level of the land. The *Watling Street* still ran from Dover through what is now Regent Street in London to Chester, zigzagging on the way to York and on to Carlisle and Newcastle. The *Fosse Way* was the western road to Bath by Cirencester, and thence from Leicester to Lincoln. The *Ermin Street* ran from London to Lincoln, Doncaster, and Yorkshire; and the *Icknield Street* to Norwich. The *Stane Street* ran from London over the Sussex Downs to Chichester, and many others were connected with these all over the country.

The "Peace of the Highways" had been maintained by a special fine under Edward the Confessor, but in mediæval days it became part of the "trinoda necessitas," the threefold burden laid upon tenants, and in the case of chartered towns, on the mayor and corporation.

In a spirit of brotherly charity towards those in need—and certainly travellers came under that head—a religious Order was founded in the twelfth century on the Continent—the Pontifices, or makers of bridges; and though the "Bridge Friars," as they were called, left no such traces in England as the wonderful bridges at Avignon and Cahors, their work was certainly undertaken here in a religious spirit. Penances were remitted to those who helped "by charitable gifts or bodily labour" in the building of causeways "where a great many people pass by." The Gild of the Holy Cross at Birmingham "mainteigned . . . and kept in good

reparaciouns the greate stone bridges and divers foule and daungerous highways, the charge whereof the towne hitselfe ys not hable to mainteign. So that the lack thereof will be a great noysaunce to the kinges majesties subjects passing to and from the marches of Wales and an vtter ruyne to the same towne, being one of the fayrest and most proffittuble townes to the kinges highness in all the shire."

In 1285 we find the state of the roads taken seriously by Edward I. Highways to market towns were widened and cleared of underwood—that haunt of robbers—for two hundred yards on either side. But the French wars of the fourteenth century led to neglect. Three times we find Parliament adjourned because the state of the roads prevent attendance. An improvement took place when turnpikes were established, or tolls for horses and carts.

So, as we wend our way to Canterbury we find many a deep hole, and in wet weather many a brook flowing across the road. But these do not hinder the progress of the square-built, heavy carts hung on two massive wheels, protected by huge nail-heads, and often drawn by a team of oxen or dogs. The rich had luxurious carriages, highly ornamented and rather like caravans on wheels; but the ladies often preferred to travel in a horse-litter, with rounded top and shafts, with a horse at either end.

Here at the turn of the road we come upon a wayside hermit, living in a hut and dependent for food upon the alms of the wayfarers. Many of these were probably deserving of Langland's scathing remarks:

> "They look full lowly to gain men's alms
> In hope to sit at even by the hot coals,
> Unlock their legs abroad, or lie at their ease."

But many of them may have been good at their prayers, all the same, and some at least, such as Richard Rolle of Hampole, managed with reason to make and keep the reputation of a saint.

Whenever we go along the highroad we are sure to meet sooner or later the Pedlar and the Minstrel. The latter

was the professional entertainer of the day, chanting his song or romance to the accompaniment of his viol, for

> "Men liken jestés for to here
> And romans rede in divers manere."

Hence they were as popular in the castle as in the alehouse, for which they sometimes composed political songs, such as that beginning,

> "When Adam delved and Eve span,
> Who was then the gentleman?"

used by John Ball to such purpose in stirring up the Peasants' Revolt.

More popular still was the pedlar, who, with the messenger, was the mediæval postman; and these, with the itinerant merchants, were always moving from place to place along the highway. These pedlars, carrying boxes full of treasure, were the joy of the countrywomen in remote villages or small feudal towns. A fourteenth-century picture shows us a sleepy fellow of this class robbed by monkeys, who find in his pack pots, hats, gloves, caps, vests, musical instruments, purses and girdles, besides, if we may trust Langland, the skins of cats for fur trimmings. All these men, in days when there was no mail and no newspaper, were the news-carriers of the land, and were welcomed as much on that account as for a sight of their wares.

One anecdote illustrating the dangers of wayfaring life in mediæval days must close this chapter.

A certain merchant of Lichfield sent two servants and horses laden with "spices and mercery" to Stafford for market day. "Beneath Cannock wood" they are seized by Sir Richard de Redeware, knight, and two squires, who carry them off to the Priory of Lappeley. On the way, however, one servant escapes. At the Priory Sir Richard meets several other knights and others, who "share with him the aforesaid spices and mercery, each one a portion according to his degree." Then the whole pack ride off to the Priory of Blythebury, where they demand hospitality, declaring that they are king's men and have travelled far. But the prioress will not open

to the roysterers. Forthwith the knights burst open the gates, give hay and oats to the horses, and pass the night in the outbuildings.

Meantime the escaped servitor has hastened back to Lichfield and warned the bailiff of the fate of his companions. The bailiff collects men to go in pursuit, and coming up with the robbers, engages them in a fight. His men are sorely wounded, but he disperses the robbers, frees the merchant with his spicery, and beheads four of the ruffian crew. Richard de Redeware, however, gets away, and as the bailiff's party are returning in triumph to Lichfield, he again falls upon them with the aid of his kinsman Walter, puts the bailiff to flight and recovers the spice.

The merchant with a little band then has resort to Stafford for justice; but the retainers of Sir Richard bar their way, so that they narrowly escape with their lives. They return to Lichfield in dread of another attack; and the petition which is the outcome of all this ends pathetically thus: "And sire, the aforesaid merchants, and many people of the town of Lichfield, are menaced by said robbers and their maintainers, so that they dare not go out of the said town at all!"

Exercises

1. Make a rough sketch of mediæval London.
2. Describe the characteristics of four of Chaucer's pilgrims.
3. What modern equivalents have we for any of the classes of wayfarers mentioned in this chapter?

Chapter X

THE LAST DAYS OF MEDIÆVAL ENGLAND

A.D. 1400–1500

NOW that we are approaching the close of the mediæval period, it will be interesting to take a bird's-eye view of our country as a stranger would have seen it somewhere in the latter years of the fifteenth century.

A Bird's-eye View of England—Landing at Rye, then "one of the portes of the realme and the chiefest for passage betwixt England and France," he would cross Kent to London, noticing the contrast between regions covered with tangled wood and scrub, and neglected fields where once had been fair tracts of corn-land. Coming from Southampton through Hampshire and Sussex, he would be struck with the long stretches of heather, and forests of oak and beech, under which feed great herds of swine, though here and there are to be seen rich green pastures for cows and sheep. Beyond the thick woods that shut in London on the north is another big stretch of heather and swampy land; to the south the great forest district of the Weald has shrunk of late years owing to the demand for fuel to feed the iron furnaces of Sussex and Kent. Indeed, about this time men were beginning to look with dismay at the shrinkage of timber and to foretell ruefully the days when "it is to be feared that broome, turffe, heath, furze . . . straw, sedge, and *also sea coal* will be good merchandise, even in the city of London."

In the North of England our traveller would find a vast tract of forest and fenland extending from Lincoln to the River Mersey, and swamps and impenetrable

woods from the Mersey to the Tweed. The North Country is still very sparsely inhabited, for it has never recovered from the devastation with which the Conqueror repaid its attempt at revolt four centuries earlier.

The Midlands he would find again a mass of forest land, so that he might well wonder at the native fear as to lack of fuel. Only here and there is it broken in Northampton and Leicester and Nottingham by pasture land and corn-fields, clustering round some town or stately monastery. The monks are still the most industrious of farmers, and the fertile lands of the north-west country have blossomed chiefly round the great Yorkshire priories of Bolton and Fountains and Rievaulx, or among the mountains of Cumberland, where the monks of Furness have their " Grange."

On the borderland between Scotland and England the low hills are almost entirely uncultivated, since crops would be promptly destroyed by the moss troopers ; but they afford good grazing ground for the cattle, which, from their being frequently " lifted " by these freebooters, were a constant cause of feud between the two countries.

Wool Trade—He would find the eastern counties, especially Norfolk, one of the most prosperous parts of England. Norwich, indeed, comes next to London fairly often on the " assessment rolls " that give the record of the wealth of towns. The great churches of Norfolk point to the well-being of the population ; and the little village of Worsted, which clusters about its church, not only gives the name to a familiar kind of wool, but also the key to the prosperity of the county. For at that time the manufacture of wool was fast increasing, and Norfolk had the advantage of the Flemish weavers who had settled there. Places like Cley and Lynn and Wells, now almost forgotten in this connection, were then busy ports, trading with the merchants of the Hanse League in such numbers that at Cley a special part of the burying-ground was reserved for foreigners. With the increased demand for wool came the system of enclosures,

which plays such a large part in the social history of the England of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Enclosures—There is no doubt that the practice of enclosing land as pasture for sheep instead of laying it down for tillage and corn brought with it many hardships. Sir Thomas More, early in the next century, speaks indignantly of " noblemen and gentlemen, yea, and certain abbots, who have no ground for tillage ; they enclose all into pastures ; they throw down houses ; they pluck down towns and leave nothing standing, but only the church to be made a sheep-house." In the *Grants of Edward V.*, too, the king's speech at opening of Parliament declares that " this kingdom falleth to decay daily by closures and emparking, by driving away of tenants and letting down of tenantries."

The landowner who " enclosed " his land for sheep needed fewer labourers ; and he did not hesitate to include in such land the " common fields " that had been at the disposal of his tenant's cattle, on the pretence that their copyhold was extinct.

When the labourer found himself unemployed, and often turned out of his cottage home, he had a legitimate grievance, and was in a worse position than before the Peasants' Revolt.

On the other hand, there was much to be said for such a system, if it had been carried through with due regard to the rights of the peasants. The unenclosed hay pastures and corn-fields were often ruined by the beasts which strayed to them from the waste or common ground. The corn-lands were improved for future tilling by being laid up for a while in grass, for the soil was so exhausted that it no longer paid the expense of corn-growing. The demand for wool was immensely to the advantage of the sheep farmer, who could now afford to pay the landowner a higher rent. Thus, though the class of small peasant proprietor began fast to disappear, the yeoman class, always the backbone of the country, grew more wealthy and more independent. No doubt there was much injustice. We read that in one Warwickshire village

"640 acres were enclosed, so that 80 persons there inhabiting were constrained to depart thence and live miserably"; and the exact date of such emigrations was remembered with bitterness more than a century later by dwellers in the district.

Moreover, there was in existence a disgraceful law that prevented those who had done any farm work in early youth from learning a handicraft, and the sons of a farmer possessing less than £20 a year (about £200) from being apprenticed to any trade.

Imprisonment, the stocks, branding on the forehead, could all be employed on the unhappy men who, thrown out of work on the land, sought employment in a town. In practice, however, this law was often ignored or suspended; and it never extended to London, since villeinage was not recognized either there or anywhere in Kent.

On the other hand, enclosures were by no means general, and by far the greater part of England was unenclosed and often uncultivated.

From Peasant to Squire—Nor was it a matter of impossibility for the son of a peasant to become a thriving professional man, or even a wealthy squire, as we see by the interesting history of one of the Paston family, whose letters throw so much light upon this period.

In the days of Richard II. Clement Paston was a simple peasant, living upon his own bit of land, which he ploughed with his own ox. When his corn was threshed he would carry it to the mill in a sack thrown across his horse, and drove his own cart to market "as a good husbandman ought to do."

He may then have been a villein or a freeholder on a small scale, but he married a serf, the sister of a serf who had risen to become a pardoner and attorney. His little holding was in the manor of Gimmingham, between Paston and Cromer, and this he gradually increased until he held five or six score acres of arable land in Paston, though he was still content to sell the produce thereof at his own market stall, and "had no manor there nor in none other place." Though he had

often to borrow the money for his fees, he managed to send his son William to a good school, and finally to enter him at an inn of court, where in due time he became a barrister. In this expense he was helped by his uncle, since the cost of education at inns of court amounted to about £450 a year, and was, as a rule, prohibited to all " of an inferior rank, since they were not able to bear the expense of maintenance." But the young man well repaid his relatives. In 1421 he was made Serjeant-at-Lawe, an equivalent to our K.C., and appointed steward to the Bishop of Norwich. In 1429 he became a judge and married the daughter of a " gentleman." By this time William Paston, son of a peasant and a bondswoman, was the lord of the manor of Oxmead and Gresham, owned a large estate in Paston, a " seignory " at Bacton, and a " free market " at Cromer.

He soon became Sir William Paston, knight, his two daughters married into good old Norfolk families, and their children ranked among the " county " people in the days of Henry VI.

Effects of Wars of the Roses—(i) Rise of the Middle Class—One important cause of the rise of the " middle " class, the men who had grown rich by industry and commerce in the fifteenth century, was the long-drawn-out " Thirty Years' War " of the Roses. This conflict struck the death-blow of feudalism, not only by sweeping away so many scions of the older nobility, but by giving the franklin his chance. By this time the latter had become the squire of modern days, a large freeholder, ploughing his own land, acting as justice of the peace, exercising a deal of influence on those around him, so that he is described by a writer of the time [1] as " father of a family "—not by any means confined to his own household—" enriched with great possessions." In the town his place was filled by the wealthy merchant, the class of men whose wealth maintained Edward IV. in power, and who were concerned, together with the country squire, in making England wealthy through her wool trade.

[1] Fortescue

Neither of these men took a willing share in the war raging between the barons and their retainers; they longed for order in this period of disorder wherein to carry out their plans for increasing their material comfort.

It was men such as these who filled the Parliaments of the period, and were paid at the rate of four shillings a day to a knight and two shillings to a yeoman or burgher. As Parliament only sat for a few days, this payment did not cover much more than travelling expenses.

(ii) Condition of the Labourer—The real burden of the long war fell upon the unhappy peasants, already suffering from the effects of enclosures and from the pestilence which seems to overshadow most of the years of the fifteenth century. The labourer still lived in a hovel, without floor, ceiling, or chimney—a mere shed containing but one room, and often divided only by a hurdle from the cow and the pig or the poultry. In the winter the family huddled together for warmth in the litter strewn on the ground.

When the labourer was thrown out of work because his place was filled by the shepherd, and his ploughed acres by grass fields, or because the squire's own property had so depreciated that he no longer could employ labour, or because he could not get land to cultivate for his support, his lot was almost desperate. The Church alone was on his side, and this fact is curiously well illustrated by a letter still in the possession of Magdalen College, Oxford, in which the Vicar of Guinton, in Gloucestershire, writes to the President and Fellows of the College on this matter. He has heard that they intend to let a large portion of land in his parish to a well-to-do farmer, and he pleads that "the land may not be let to any one man, but to the poor of the parish, to the community rather than to one man, to the poor and the innocents before a gentleman or a gentleman's gentleman."

(iii) The Nobility—In the latter part of the century, when the feudal baronage was playing its last act, we get no proud picture of their condition. They had fallen away

even in physical stature, being for the most part small men, feeble of sinew, caring more for dress, dice, and cards than for the athletics of their ancestors. Their sons married at a very early age, often at fourteen, and in many cases their wives were mere children. Never again was England to see the days when the Earl of Warwick, the King-Maker, kept open house in the Strand, when oxen were roasted whole and any man might enter and carry off as much as his dagger, used as a spit, could hold.

Raids of Retainers—But their power was still outwardly maintained by the enormous retinues of retainers who wore their " livery " and were maintained at their expense. Living in idleness within the bounds of the feudal castle, these fellows passed their time in quarrels either among themselves or with the " retainers " of a neighbour baron. The support of such men as these weighed far more heavily than the arm of the law, and disputes in those days were most often settled by force. One of the Paston Letters relates how some relatives of a certain squire, disappointed of the property they thought should be theirs at his death, invaded the house and held it as though against besiegers.

" The men of Cotton Hall," says the writer, " be strangely disposed towards you, for, as they say, they make revel there, melt lead and break down your bridge, so that no man go into the place but upon a ladder ; and they make them as strong as they can. As for Edward Dale (a neighbour), they threaten him so because he will send them no food, that he dare not remain at home."

And in another letter Mistress Paston writes to her husband, who is absent in the Duke of Norfolk's train: " As for tidings, we have none good in this country. It was told me that Richard Southwell hath entered into the manor of Hale, which belongs to the Lady Boys, and keepeth it with such strength with such another fellowship (*i.e.* band of retainers) . . . and wasteth and despoileth all that there is."

Not only were these retainers an immense obstacle in the way of keeping law and order, but they were also a

heavy expense. "Brother," writes Sir John Paston, "it is that the King shall come into Norfolk in haste . . . and if I come with him, I must make a livery of twenty gowns, which I must pick out by your advice; and as for the cloth for such persons as be in the county, if it might be had at Norwich I wot not. . . . And whether ye will offer yourself to wait upon my Lord of Norfolk or not, I would ye did that were best. . . He shall have two hundred in a livery blue and tawny, and blue on the left side."

Raids of Barons—Not only the retainers, but the nobles themselves, set an example of lawlessness. We read that on one occasion the Duke of Norfolk, mentioned in the last letter, entered Caistor Manor, owned by one of the Pastons, drove off a flock of sheep and oxen, and carried off a hundred pounds' worth of furniture. At Hellesdon the same thing was done by the Duke of Suffolk. He is said to have removed "ij fedder beddes with ij bolsters, iiij materas, iij cortayns of blewe lakeram, vi payre of sheetes of ij webbes" from the chambers of the manor house; "ij pantrye knyves" and a "syff to syft malt" from the "botere" and "brewhere"; a "mortal of marbell with a pestell" from the kitchen; and "gear taken out of chirche."

Exercises

1. What was the effect of the Enclosure system on the social condition of the people? What modern aspects of agriculture recall this system?
2. Illustrate from contemporary documents the change in "class" divisions in the fifteenth century.
3. What were some of the drawbacks of the Retainer system?

Chapter XI

HOW PRINTING CAME TO ENGLAND

A.D. 1450–1509

NOW that we have taken a bird's-eye view of some of the conditions of the fifteenth century, we can hardly illustrate the social life of the time better than by the career of the man who, in his quiet corner of Westminster, did more than any king, baron, or knight to bring a new England to birth.

Yeoman Life in the Country—William Caxton was the son of a well-to-do farmer or yeoman, owning his own farm perhaps, or holding it from the lord of the manor. In the latter case he might still be bound to render a certain amount of service for rent, such as keeping roads in repair, reaping the harvest, supplying labourers for the plough.

Till he was seventeen the boy William must have taken his share in the work of what would be, in those days, a self-sustaining household. Food, clothes, tools, furniture, all were produced at home. The meat eaten was the flesh of animals killed on the farm; the bread was made from the rye or barley grown, reaped, threshed, and ground in the home mill; fleeces and skins were cleaned, tanned, dressed, spun, and woven into garments; the wooden bowls, platters, spoons, and trenchers were home-made, and so were the benches and tables. The candles, the horn lanterns which held them, the beer, newly brewed each week, all were the work of the busy housewife. Outside the father would find his flocks of sheep well repaid his care, for England was, since the days of Edward III., beginning to make her own cloth instead of exporting wool to Flanders; and the well-dyed English

product was already famous in Caxton's days. Probably the farmer's trade in wool brought him into frequent contact with the London merchant Robert Large, the future Lord Mayor of London for it was to him that young William was apprenticed in his seventeenth year.

Before he leaves it for the last time, let us glance at the homestead of his youth. It is a long, low building, with a central room in which the whole public life of the family is lived—cooking, working, meals, amusement, and sleeping. Above this, or possibly on one side, is the solar, the private room of the heads of the family and the storehouse for their personal treasures. The outer walls would be of wattle, with timber cross beams, the roof supported by great "roof-trees." These country houses would probably have no glass in the windows, which would be protected from the weather by sheepskin curtains; and as yet the smoke still escapes from an opening in the roof. The floor is of earth, strewn with rushes. A low platform at one end holds the table of the master and mistress, and down the middle stretches the board round which all the servants and labourers gather for meals.

The dress of the yeoman class was very different from the extravagant garb of the townsman. The farmer and his son would wear a tunic of heavy cloth or possibly of sheepskin, with a coarse linen shirt and long hose from hip to toe. The mother and wife would wear a short full gown with half sleeves, and a long thick cloak for out of doors. Her head-dress was a light cap with a hanging border, or the hood of her cloak.

Apprentice Life in London—The year before Caxton's birth (1420) had seen Sir Richard Whittington Lord Mayor of London for the third time, and every merry prentice boy knew the romantic story of his cat and of the bells that called him to future greatness. It must have been with a light heart that young William Caxton signed his "indentures" at the Gild Hall, and found himself free of London city. No great changes had taken

place since we last saw it in the fourteenth century. The principal gates of the city—Bishop's Gate, the Ald Gate, and Lud Gate—were still guarded by fortresses, and were shut at sunset except for the postern, which might be opened after " parley." The heads of traitors and other political offenders were still stuck on spears both here and on London Bridge. Riots, attacks on the Jews who were shut up each night in the Jewry, public fights in the streets between retainers, were of frequent occurrence. His life as apprentice was a busy one. He had first of all to learn all details of his trade, such as the difference of texture in cloth, the counting and weighing of fleeces, the packing and unpacking of delicate fabrics in their journey to Bruges or Calais. He had also to wait on his master's family, to run errands, fetch water from the conduits, and take his share in the cry of " What d'ye lack ? What d'ye lack ? " by which the prentices drew the attention of passers-by to the goods spread upon the booth before the house. Nor was this all. By the regulations of the craftsmen of gilds, he was bound to go to church, to hear sermons, to attend at Smithfield for drill and archery practice on Sundays and holy days, of which there was on an average one to each week. But the rest of his time was free for wrestling, dancing, football, or the cock-fighting so popular among the prentice lads ; and when May Day came round, he would join the merry throng that gathered round the great pole or shaft set up on the green of the many villages that lay just outside the city, and spend the day in mad revel till dusk drove them home.

Nowadays his dress was a short tunic of fustian, long woollen hose, a flat cap, and heavy wooden-soled shoes. His " breakfast," save perhaps for a bit of barley bread, was at eleven in winter and twelve in summer, and was in reality the dinner or principal meal of the day. Stewed meat or fish, solid pasties, rye bread, and a horn of beer or ale satisfied well his appetite before he went to work again. At night-time he slept either in the loft over the archway leading to the " garth " or yard, or among the bales of cloth under the counter.

Once a year he would have to attend the great Cloth Fair of St Bartholomew at Smoothfields or Smithfield, solemnly opened by the Prior of the Monastery, who had a claim upon certain dues and tolls paid by the traders assembled upon his property, as we have seen at Winchester in an earlier chapter. There he would see dark-faced foreign merchants, still looked upon with some suspicion by the Londoners, who required them to leave the city within forty days; and perhaps his talk with them opened a vista of new lands and fresh ideas which were to bear future fruit.

Again, he would be present at the election of his master in the great Gild Hall, as Lord Mayor of London, and after the service, held in the adjoining chapel of St Faith's, would follow the procession to Westminster Palace, whither the new-made mayor went to pay homage to the king. In those days it went on horseback, later by barge up the river, and was a fine affair indeed. The officials of the city, the chamberlain, the remembrancer, the huntsman, the sword-bearer, the mace-bearer rode in the midst of gay banners, embroidered figures of the patron saints of the city churches, and the great banner of the city, showing the Cross of St George and the Sword of St Paul; and after these walked representatives of all the city gilds, bearing their symbols and banners.

Many a strange sight would the young prentice see in the London of that day. The cheating tradesman whipped through the streets, the roysterer who disturbed the "king's peace" after nightfall and was set in the stocks, the vagrant standing to be pelted in the pillory, were all common spectacles of the day; but he well might have been a somewhat horrified witness of that stranger scene, when the Duchess of Gloucester, wife of that universal favourite and reckless scatterbrain, Duke Humphrey, being accused of "practising harm" against the young king Henry, by incantations and witchcraft, was compelled to ask for sanctuary in Westminster Abbey. But the Abbot sternly repelled the reputed witch, who knelt pleading at the entrance, and she

was imprisoned in the Tower. Later on young Caxton would have seen her walk from the prison to Paul's Cross performing public penance in a white sheet, with the scarlet letter *S* for sorceress on front and back, for three days in succession.

Life as a Merchant—Four years before his apprenticeship was out, Caxton's master died, showing how well his prentice pleased him by leaving him a legacy of twenty marks—about £130 or £150 in modern values—and cancelling his indentures. At once the youth of twenty chose a wider field, and being warmly recommended by his gild of clothworkers to the corresponding gild in Bruges, he set off, probably by a freight boat, for the Low Countries.

It was during his residence in Bruges, then the third city in importance of the famous Hanseatic League of Merchants, that the loss of France occurred, leaving nothing but Calais to justify the title still held by the English kings of "King of France." From his quiet, busy headquarters in the beautiful mediæval city, the "Venice of the North," he would hear also of the long War of the Roses, of the people's insurrection under Jack Cade, of the relentless fighting, strong diplomacy, and shameless want of faith of the Earl of Warwick, "Last of the Barons," and "Kingmaker of England." But he possibly took still more interest in the fact that the new king, Edward IV., doing all in his power to win the favour of the London merchants, was approaching Duke Philip, ruler of Flanders and Burgundy, with the object of getting relaxed the restrictions which were laid upon the trade between those countries and England.

At that period Caxton, now a man of forty-three, was Rector of the House of the English Merchants at Bruges, a community living under strict regulations, much like a religious house; and it was he who naturally was chosen as envoy to the Duke. The result was excellent. Commerce between England and Burgundy was to be freely resumed, and besides Calais, a Flemish

port was to be made an English "staple," where wool and cloth could be bought and sold.

Five years later the successful merchant, representative of the most flourishing of the trade gilds, would witness at Bruges the wedding of the Lady Margaret, sister of the English king, to the young Duke Charles the Bold; he would also see with dismay the arrogant refusal of the Duke to receive the Constable of France, representing the king of that country, who chose to arrive in great state of armed followers, with a drawn sword borne before him as a sign of feudal overlordship.

Life as a Student in Flanders—From this time Caxton seems to have been employed as a secretary to the Duchess, who, no doubt, took great interest in her countryman. It was during this period that he was asked by a certain Canon of Lausanne to translate "some historie, as well in Latin as in Romance, as in other fashion written." In this work he was greatly encouraged by the Duchess Margaret, so that he "laboured in the said translation after his poor and simple cunnynge." Soon such quiet tasks were to be interrupted rudely by the appearance of King Edward as a fugitive at his sister's court, and it was on his return to England as king that he sent a letter of thanks to the nobles, the mayor, and the burghers of Bruges, among whom Caxton would certainly be included, for their welcome to him in exile.

And meantime the studious merchant had been residing in his royal mistress' castle at Cologne, busy translating the "Histories of Troye," into English, "finished at Cologne in time of the troublous world," and becoming more and more interested in a little group of men, hailing probably from Mentz, who were eagerly carrying on the new process of printing from wooden blocks. He was the more interested that he found the mechanical process of writing his books exceedingly tedious. "For as much," he tells us," as in the writing of the same my pen is worn, mine hand weary and not stedfast, mine eyes dimmed with overmuch looking on the white paper, and my courage not so ready to labour as it hath been . . . therefore

I have practised and learnt, at my charge and dispense, to ordain this said book in print, after the manner and form as you may here see ; it is not written with pen and ink as other bookes are to the ende that every man may have them at once—

" I, without pen or pencil, here imprinted this book."

Such was the proud device of many of the early printers of those days.

The Life of the Craftsman Printer—Some thirty-six years after he left England, Caxton returned to London and sought anew the " freedom " of the city. For he came now not as merchant gildsman, nor was he reckoned as one of those " Brothers of the Pen," Gilds of Writers, or " Paul's Scriveners," who plied their trade at the entrance of churches or cathedrals, wearing an ink-horn slung from their girdles, and a couple of feathered quills stuck in their tunic. Looked coldly on by these, he sought the city of Westminster, separated then from London by a long and bad road. But Caxton would probably go by river, passing Baynard's Castle, built by the Duke Humphrey fifty years before ; the Friary of the Dominicans (Black Friars) ; the Convent of the White Friars (Augustinians) ; the round Church of the Templars ; the Savoy Palace, home of John of Gaunt, not yet rebuilt since its destruction by the rioters in Wat Tyler's Rebellion ; and York House, built for another royal prince. The Palace of Westminster stood close by the great Abbey, founded by Edward the Confessor, and within the Palace was the Star Chamber, the painted room where king and council met, the Queen's Hall, the King's Wardrobe, the Royal Nursery, all surrounded by a great expanse of gardens, fishponds, vineries, granaries, stables, mews, and barns.

The buildings were lofty, with pointed gables and rich stained glass, but were insignificant beside the grandeur of the neighbouring Abbey, with its great monastery, its famous school for boys, its Scriptorium, its vast hall,

and the almonry, where rich and poor received ungrudging hospitality.

In the Jerusalem Chamber the abbot had his residence; the dining hall used by the boys of Westminster School to-day was the monks' refectory, and the great schoolroom their dormitory.

To a corner of this community, which formed in itself a little self-contained town, Caxton was welcomed by Abbot John, and at once set to work to put up his printing press, make his ink, and to publish the following notice—one of the most interesting advertisements ever given to the world[1]:—

"If it please any man, spiritual or temporal, to buy any Pyes of two and three commemorations of Salisbury Use, emprynted after the form of the present letter, which be well and truly correct, let him come to Westminster into the Almonry at the Red Pale, and he shall have them good cheap."

The first document actually printed in England then, was this almanac, directing how and when certain feasts should be "commemorated," the "Pyes" being manuscript directions which were difficult to read.[2]

Among the first books was his own translation of the *Histories of Troy*, his *Life of Jason*, and the *Game and Playe of Chesse*, dedicated to the king's brother, the young Duke of Clarence.

For before long the man who had brought a new craft into England had come under the notice of the royal dwellers in the Palace hard by. King Edward IV., himself a scholar, was glad to be his patron; the queen's brother, Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers, had his own book, the *Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers* printed by Caxton at the Red Pale. The hump-backed Duke of Gloucester, the king's own brother, afterwards Richard III., together with young Clarence, were of the royal party when Edward IV., a fine tall man, "head and shoulders taller than the people," came to those quiet

[1] A copy of this handbill is preserved in the Bodleian Library.

[2] The word "pie" to-day is used for printers' type indiscriminately mixed together.

precincts to examine the wonderful, if, to our ideas, clumsy mechanism at work. Probably the little Prince Edward of Wales was an interested member of the party, that same little prince whose early life was so minutely arranged by his royal father.

Life of a Prince—" He is to rise early, to attend Mass, to begin directly after his meal some form of virtuous learning." " Noble stories " are to be read to him at dinner. He is to be encouraged in all seemly sports and to be sent " merry and joyous " to bed. He is to company with the sons of nobles and gentlemen, none of whom are to be allowed to pass their days with him in idleness.

His sisters, the Princesses Elizabeth and Mary, had just as much care lavished on their education. They learnt French and Spanish from foreign governesses; great pains were taken with their handwriting; they were taught the harp and the viol; and the president of the king's minstrels gave them lessons in singing. For the king was a patron of the " liberal arts " ; he had established a Gild of Music in the royal household, and gave liberal support to the " children and gentlemen " singers of the Chapel Royal.

A Royal Palace—The occasion of a visit from Louis de Bruges, envoy of Charles of Burgundy, while it must have been of special interest to Caxton, gives us a peep into the interior of the royal castle at Windsor. The rooms prepared for the Envoy and his suite were hung with silk and tapestry hangings. In one bedroom was a canopied bed, with sheets of silk, coverings of fine cloth, and a counterpane of cloth of gold lined with ermine. In another, a couch, with feather bed and linen hangings; and a cupboard—a most unusual piece of furniture in those days.

Still more unusual were the baths, " with white hangings." When they were bathed, the guests were offered refreshments—syrups, comfits, green ginger, and " hippocras " before retiring.

Another visitor describes the state kept by the king. " Very great reverence is always paid to him, even the greatest noblemen kneel before him. At a banquet the king's stool was central and alone; none spoke without

obeisance ; in drinking the cup was raised, and solemn salutation made to the King."

The queen "sat on a golden stool alone at her table ; her mother and the King's sister stood far below her. And when the Queen spoke to her mother or to the Lady Anne, they kneeled down every time before her. And all her ladies and maids, and those who waited upon her, even great lords, had to kneel while she was eating, which continued three hours."

During the troubled years that followed the death of Edward IV., when Richard of Gloucester was grasping the sceptre with ruthless hands, the printer of Westminster was going on quietly with his work, improving his type and working hard at his craft ; for by this time (1480) a rival press had been set up in London by the Lithuanian exile, John Lettow, who used the fine Italian type, and made the pages of the older printer look clumsy by comparison.

Whatever was Caxton's private opinion of the man at whose orders the little sons of his former royal patron were said to have been murdered, he seems to have accepted the goodwill of the new king without protest, for we have an account of Richard's visit to him in 1584, accompanied by his queen. But his chief patron in these years was the Earl of Arundel, for whom he translated and printed an illustrated edition of the *Golden Legend*, introducing into the title page the Arundel coat of arms and motto " my truste is *fasste*," the last word being indicated by a running horse !

His last patron was Henry VII., of whose coronation pageant he would have been a witness. Save for the coronation of his queen, it was probably the last to be held on so magnificent a scale in the reign of that penurious monarch, who must have looked sourly on the dresses of his nobles ; the tunics of " embossed goldsmith's work," with heavy blue or crimson sleeves ; the hats or caps of coloured velvet decked with precious stones ; the bright cloaks with tassels of gold and silver.

The very fact that nowhere in the many books and pamphlets printed by Caxton in these stirring years, when three sovereigns were fighting and plotting for a

crown, is there a mention of the political events of the day, suggests that they had little effect upon the social condition of the growing middle class, represented by the citizen of the town and the yeoman of the country. Where they were not forced by actual personal contact to take part in these struggles, these stood aloof, and thereby cultivated a spirit of independence impossible in feudal days.

And now, with Caxton, we must take our leave of the fifteenth century, pausing only to note the entry in the parish register of accounts for St Margaret's, Westminster, in the year 1491.

> Atte bureying of William Caxton for
> iiij torches . . . . . vjs., viijd.
> For the belle atte same bureying . vjd.

Exercises

1. Show some of the more important effects of the invention of printing in modern life. Are there any disadvantages connected with it ?

2. Describe, if you can, a visit to a modern printing press, and compare it with that of Caxton.

3. Study, if possible, the early printed books in the British Museum, and write down your impressions of them.

Some Books to be Consulted or Read

The Chronicles of Florence of Worcester, Roger of Hoveden, Roger of Wendover, Mathew Paris, and especially of Jocelyn of Brakelond.
English Society in the Eleventh Century. (Vanogradoff.)
Feudal England, Mediæval England. (Bateson.)
Companion to English History. (Barnard.)
A History of Everyday Things. (Quennell.)
Story of English Towns. (Ditchfield.)
Growth of the English Towns. (Green.)
The Angevin Empire. (Ramsay.)
Chaucer and his England. (Coulton.)
Town Life in the Fifteenth Century. (Green.)
England in the Age of Wyclif. (Trevelyan.)
The Great Pestilence. (Gasquet.)

The Coming of the Friars. (Jessopp.)
Mediæval Parish Life. (Gasquet.)
Social History in the Fifteenth Century. (Abram.)
Six Centuries of Work and Wages. (Thorold Rogers.)
History of Gilds. (Toulmin-Smith.)
Survey of London. (Stow.)
Chronicles of Froissart.
Wayfaring Life in the Fourteenth Century. (Jusserand.)
Scenes and Characters of the Middle Ages. (Cutts.)

Chapter XII

A NEW WORLD

A.D. 1500–1550

AT the outset of the Tudor period we are faced with a curious and contradictory position.

All through the fifteenth century we have traced a growing spirit of independence of despotic control, and even in the thirteenth and fourteenth century such a spirit was by no means wanting. A quite typical event of the early fourteenth century shows us a baron and his suite passing through London and chalking the doors of certain houses with a white cross as a signal that they were "requisitioned" for compulsory hospitality. Whereupon we see the citizens indignantly turning out to rub off the marks and to make good their claim to be free of all such annoying demands.

Absolutism—In the early part of the sixteenth century we find exactly the same thing shown in the resistance of another generation of Londoners to Cardinal Wolsey's "amicable loan"—in other words, a forced tax; and yet, within the next few years those same citizens are found readily acquiescing in the absolute rule of a Tudor king.

How is this to be accounted for?

One reason was certainly that the people, hardly yet able to forget the almost incessant civil conflicts of the fifteenth century, were sick of war and only too ready to live peaceably under the rule of any king who would see that they had fair play.

Another reason, less apparent perhaps, was the fact that it was a period in which the influence of single characters upon the people was very strongly marked, either for good or evil. Thus we have the whole nation

roused against Wolsey's attempt to create a servile Parliament, and that same nation existing peacefully under Henry VIII., who never troubled to call a Parliament at all. For where Wolsey openly showed the steel gauntlet, Henry, far more really implacable, dealt with them velvet-gloved, offered them tacitly a share in his spoils, deluded them into thinking that their will was his. Few of the old nobility survived to contest the point with him, and a new aristocracy, created at his choice, was sure to be fairly subservient.

This being so, we are prepared to find the first half of the century a period of change in almost all departments of social life, reflecting thereby the restless nature of a clever strong-willed ruler of very modern tendencies, whose rule of life was consistently that of pleasing himself at any cost.

The New Learning and the New Religion—The chief changes in the social history of this period were brought about by two closely connected movements—the Renaissance, generally known in England as the " New Learning " ; and the Reformation of the Church of England, which meant, first and foremost, the setting up of an establishment independent of the government and authority by which the rest of Catholic Christendom was ruled.

To regard the Tudor Renaissance and Reformation as a strong, fresh breeze stirring the stagnant waters of a mediæval Britain, sunk in ignorance and opposed to all reform, is one of the many mistakes of our older historians. The herald of the movement was the invention of printing, and that, as we have seen, was received with enthusiasm in England long before Luther made his protest at Worms or Grocyn taught Greek at Oxford. Indeed, from the intellectual point of view the years between 1480 and 1520, before the Renaissance movement had actually " crossed the Alps," are among the most stirring and enlightened of our history.

Nor do the records, especially those of wood and stone, go to prove that the Church had lost its hold upon the people at this time. For it was a period of great

activity not so much in church building as in ornamentation, a period of organ-making, of bell-founding, of famous Church music such as the " prick song " or part music of Byrd and Taverner, of painted chancel screens, of wall paintings such as those now hidden by the choir stalls in Eton College Chapel. And these, we are told by the parish records, were the gifts, not of a few rich benefactors, but of the people themselves.

Martin Luther, the Apostle of the Reformation, himself bears witness to the fact that neither the New Learning nor the New Religion was imposed upon a stagnant world. " Never," he says, in speaking of the period immediately preceding, " have people seen so much building, so much cultivation of the soil. Never has such good drink, such abundant food been within the reach of many. Dress has become so rich that it cannot be improved. Commerce circles the globe, embraces the whole world; all the wits have improved and are improving . . . a youth of twenty knows more than twenty doctors did in days gone by."

It must, on the other hand, be realized that the strong flame of religious faith that had inspired the Middle Ages—the spirit that had founded monasteries, sent forth the friars to be the religious and social crusaders of their day, built great churches to the honour of God, and made England a land of saints—was to a large extent spent.

New forces had modified the social conditions of the people to such an extent that neither monk nor friar was now the social saviour of his day, and their active work had almost of necessity to be bound up more with their own private interests. To their credit it must be said that they by no means set their faces against the new order of things when that order was in the line of enlightened thought and education.

The Church and the New Learning—On the Continent, it is true, a section of the Church, symbolized by such men as Savonarola, had looked grimly enough upon that enthusiasm for classical models, pagan modes of expression,

and the pagan spirit which had marked the Renaissance in Italy. And so it had, no doubt, become the fashion to gibe at the opinion of ecclesiastics as old-fashioned and reactionary, even though, in a later phase, the Pope of the Reformation was one of the keenest supporters of the Renaissance movement. But there is much evidence to show that the Church in this country never opposed the true " Revival of Letters," though it set its face dead against that teaching of Luther and his followers which, in the sixteenth century, seems to have been known as the " New Learning " more commonly than the study of Greek. Thus, in 1531, the *Compleynte of the Plowman* says :

" The bishops and priests are calling out, ' What *New Learning* is it ? ' These fellows teach *New Learning*, these are they which trouble all the world with their *New Learning*."

The Greek Spirit—The real Revival of Letters—that " new and perfect flame "—was first lighted in Italy through the study of Greek literature, hidden for centuries by the high walls of prejudice and strife that had so long divided the Eastern from the Western World. The Greek spirit, with its joy in life, its clear-cut sense of beauty, its vital fire of enthusiasm, its keen insight, came as a marvellous revelation upon a world that was yet well prepared for such an awakening ; and England was to give it no tepid welcome.

It seemed a mere chance that at the very threshold of the fifteenth century a Greek emperor, imploring aid from the West against the infidels attacking Constantinople, should have been entertained with hospitality by the monks of Christ Church, Canterbury ; but fifty years later it is a fact that Greek studies were in full swing in that college of monks, and that two of their number, Selling and Hadley, were among the first Englishmen to study Greek in Italy. When the former returned to Canterbury he made the monastic school a centre for this study ; Linacre was his pupil, and went from thence to Canterbury College (afterwards Christ Church), Oxford.

Later we find him accompanying his old pupil to Florence, where Linacre shares the studies of the children of Lorenzo de Medici, one of whom was to become Pope Leo X., the "Pope of the Reformation." Then Linacre, now a priest, goes to Rome, where he makes friends with Grocyn, and returns with him as a pioneer of Greek literature to Oxford. There Sir Thomas More, the future Chancellor and finest product of the Renaissance, becomes his pupil. Writing to Colet at this time, More says: "I pass my time here with Grocyn, Linacre, and our Lilly—the first, as you know, the only master of my life when you are absent; the second the director of my studies; the third my dearest companion in all the affairs of my life."

Of these men, Colet was to found St Paul's School, in order to educate for the Church boys who should show the finest influences of the Renaissance, and Lilly was to be its head-master, and the first schoolmaster to write a Latin Grammar for public schools. But the man who left the greatest mark upon the education of the day was Sir Thomas More himself. His own home at Chelsea, filled with clever daughters and young sons-in-law, orphan relatives and happy guests, was, we are told, "more like an universite" than a family or a private school.

Since all these men lived and died as sons of the Catholic Church, we can scarcely say that the Revival of Learning was either the seed or the fruit of the Reformation. The less learned clerics probably opposed the new movement, but their opposition was more than counterbalanced by the weight of such men as Wolsey, Warham, Fisher, Grocyn, Colet, More, and Linacre, all of whom helped it by founding schools or colleges, and by doing their utmost to revolutionize the older methods of education on these lines.

The Reformation in England—A passion for novelty in any direction is apt to run to excess; and though the earlier phases of the Renaissance in England were encouraged and, indeed, maintained, by strong Churchmen, it only needed that the movement should be inter-

preted through Luther and his German followers by their catchword, " Freedom of thought for the individual in place of authority," and matters were bound to go to extremes.

Early in the reign Henry VIII. had stood forth as " Defender of the Faith," and of the Papacy against the attacks of Luther. But since his passion for the Lutheran Anne Bullen, his religious convictions had gone to the wall. Authority, in the person of the Pope as representing the Church, had absolutely refused permission to divorce his lawful wife Catherine ; therefore Authority must go, and the links that bound him and his realm to the Church of Christendom be broken.

Never was a great movement, endless in its effects, brought about more suddenly. " Only the royal power —as in England—or the subversion of the royal authority through a successful rebellion—as in Scotland," could have brought about a breach so swift, and politically so complete. Nothing shows more convincingly the despotic power established by the king. For that it was in no sense a movement of the people, a study of the State papers shows convincingly. Professor Gairdner, the historian of the period, has proved how these reveal the resentment of the people, the many secret communications between leading noblemen and foreign ambassadors, " urging the Emperor to invade England and deliver the people from a tyranny from which they were unable to free themselves."

Yet in the end the bulk of the people, or rather, let us say, the bulk of those who knew best how to make themselves heard, acquiesced. And the reason lies here.

We have seen the growth in power of the middle classes and the creation under the Tudors of a new lay aristocracy largely drawn from the rich merchant class of former days. These men had long looked with a jealous eye upon the possessions of the ecclesiastical nobility, the abbots and " spiritual peers," the priest chancellors and presidents of councils ; and when Henry VIII. dangled the bait of " dissolution and redistribution " before their eyes, they were glad enough to accept the king as their

pope in order to enrich themselves at the expense of the Church.

The question of doctrines did not at first come into the matter. Almost to the end of his life Henry tried to convince himself that he held the Catholic faith, and some of his subjects did the same. But thinking men saw much too clearly the connection between things temporal and things spiritual to accept the position. Sir Thomas More was one of those who gave up his life on Tower Hill rather than cringe before the will of his master. He had always been one of those who regretted the worldly spirit that had crept into the Church of this period, but he was content to wait for that reform within the Church itself which was bound to come as a reaction from the spirit of worldliness then pervading all Christendom. He could not see that the passionate whim of a king justified the severing of the rope that bound the Church in England to the barque of Peter; and he knew that when once authority was thrown overboard the shipwreck of doctrine must follow.

So Sir Thomas More died for the Catholic faith, as did many another, abbot and prior and priest and friar, who could not conscientiously accept the king as "Supreme Head of the Church."

Dissolution of the Monasteries—Meanwhile the wholesale dissolution of the monasteries was going on apace. The smaller houses were the first to go, the Franciscan friars the first to suffer because they openly attacked the legality of the king's marriage with Anne Bullen; and the immediate result was a rising in Lincoln and another in York which might have had serious results enough. But the insurgents were neither well-equipped nor a match in any way for the treacherous, fair promises of the king. They agreed too readily to disband, and so fell speedy victims to his vengeance.

Yet in these risings we hear, almost for the first time since the Peasants' Revolt, the voice of the labouring class, the people who were to gain nothing in the universal pillage and were to see the destruction of their

famous abbeys, the execution of their kindly landlords the monks, and the country overrun with homeless, penniless dependants of the religious houses of their land.

Secure in his success, the king pressed on the work of dissolution, so that by the beginning of the year 1540 scarcely a monastery survived. Again one is struck by the apparent acquiescence of the people in what must have conveyed to most of them the shock of sacrilege and the sense of loss. Now and then, however, the silence is broken, and we get the opinion of those who had ceased to be mesmerized, as was England as a whole, by the royal will.

"You have heard before," writes a contemporary, "how the Cardinall suppressed many monasteries, of the which one was called Beggam in Sussex, the which was very commodious to the countrey; but so befell the cause, that a ryotous companie, disguysed and unknown, with painted face and visures, came to the same Monasterie, and brought with them the Canons and put them in theyre place again, and promised them that whensoever they should ring the bell, that they would come with a great power and defend them."

Henry himself in a letter to Wolsey realizes "there is great murmuring at it (the dissolution) throughout the realm, good and bad. They say not that all that is ill-gotten is bestowed on the College, but that the College is the Cloke for covering all mischiefs."

To give the king his due, he seems in the beginning to have intended to devote the vast property of which he despoiled the Church to better the social conditions of the people. There is a draft of an Act in Henry's own writing which suggests that "the wealth of the religious houses might be turned to better use whereby God's Word might the better be set forth, children brought up in learning, clerics nourished in the universities, old servants decayed have livings, almshouses for poor folk to be sustained in, readers of Greek, Hebrew, and Latin to have good stipends, exhibitions for ministers of the Church, besides many new bishoprics to be made."

But the Act itself, when it was passed in 1539, merely secured to the king's own use the property of "any such monasteries as had come into his hands."

Effect on Social Conditions—In the end, out of twenty-six promised Sees, six new bishoprics were endowed; and these, with Cardinal College, to be known after Wolsey's fall as Christ Church, Oxford, were the only benefit to the public out of the spoil. For the rest, most of the land was divided among the "upper classes," while the money passed into the pockets of the king.

The effect of this redistribution of land was far-reaching. Estates granted to the nobility changed hands quickly, were often re-divided. Rich merchants obtained them, became estate owners, and were admitted by marriage to the ranks of the nobility. Their land was sublet to small farmers of the yeoman class on advantageous terms, and a period of prosperity set in, tempered often by a spirit of jealous dislike and distrust of the new and grasping owners who had taken the place of the easy-going abbot landlord.

Before many years had passed new ideals of trade and a craze for wealth had displaced the mediæval zeal for religion. The merchant filled the place once held by the crusader, and the old spirit of chivalry died out in the race for money-getting. In the general feeling that all that was mediæval was "out of date," the old trade gilds disappeared, on the pretext that they were "religious bodies," and the new trading companies took their place. An effort was made to retain the apprentice system on the old lines, but, owing to the lack of the gilds to which they so peculiarly belonged, the system languished, and had to be revived later on under new conditions.

Upon the universities the effect of the Reformation was for a time disastrous. No longer were poor students helped by the old religious corporations which had formerly sent them to the university. At Oxford in 1547 and 1550 there were no student graduates at all. In 1645 the Cambridge scholars petitioned the king for extension of

privileges "lest learning fall there into total destruction." In the reign of Edward VI. even so stout a Protestant as Latimer regrets the old times when "they helped the scholars, for since then almost no man helpeth to maintayn them." The destruction of the priceless monastic libraries amongst other treasures of antiquity, as well as the later wholesale violence wherewith the mediæval churches were rifled, desecrated, their statues destroyed, their altars and screens torn down, their pictured walls whitewashed, all breathed the spirit of hatred against the old order of things.

"I remember," writes Sir Thomas Pope, who refounded Durham College, at Oxford, as Trinity College, in the year of Queen Mary, "when I was a young scholar at Eton, the Greek tongue was growing apace, the study of which is now much decayed."

The reason is not far to seek. The universities were too busy with religious controversy to have time for liberal learning; and the break with Rome had cut off England from her connection with the best work of Continental scholars.

Before Edward VI. had been more than a few months on the throne, the social effect of the rapid changes in doctrine began to make themselves felt. A hundred diversities appeared. While some were trying to adapt the Catholic ritual to the new English Prayer Book, the Princess Mary, heir to the throne, insisted upon the Latin Mass; while a woman, Joan Bocher, was being burnt for denying the divinity of Christ, the Anabaptists were preaching loudly against infant baptism; and Somerset the Protector, a renegade Catholic, to show his respect for religion, was pulling down the Church of St-Mary-le-Strand to make way for his own palace of Somerset House.

In the latter years of the first half of the century disorder, discontent, and the inevitable poverty arising from the lack of those who had not only succoured the poor but found employment for thousands of people, are evident enough. Royal proclamations are necessary to forbid "quarreling and shooting in churches," and the

"bringing of horses and mules through the same, making God's house like a stable or common inn." "Priests are not to be mobbed or hustled." "Church plate and furniture is not to be stolen outright." At the same time, Latimer, Protestant Bishop of Worcester, laments that "schools are not maintained, scholars have not exhibitions, the preaching office decayeth. The gentry invade the profits of the Church, leaving but the title . . . benefices are let out in fee farms, given to servants for keeping of hounds, hawks, and horses. The clergy, kept by sorry pittances, are forced to put themselves into gentlemen's houses and serve as clerks of kitchens, surveyors, or receivers."

Moreover, the Council is informed that "private men's halls are hung with altar cloths, their tables and beds covered with copes, that some at dinner drank from chalices"; nay more, that the wives of the married clergy under this new régime wore robes fashioned out of the vestments used by the priests at Mass.

The Clergy—Another noticeable feature was the decay in the standard of the clergy, a state of things that lasted, with some notable exceptions, up to the nineteenth century.

"Patrons," complains Bernard Gilpin, Rector of Houghton-le-Spring, "see that none do their duty; they think it as good to put in asses as men. Bishops were never so liberal of putting in unlearned priests, and patrons as liberal in making unlearned vicars. . . . Learning decays: men will not send their children to the schools. Look upon the wells of the realm—Oxford and Cambridge—they are almost dried up. Ministers do not think themselves obliged to do any pastoral work the first year after presentation because they get no pay, the king taking the first-fruit."

Even more startling is the reason given by Lord Warwick to Cecil for such negligence of duty: "Priests be so sotted of wives and children that they forget their poor neighbours and all other matters of their calling."

Such a state of things was necessarily the result of

an upheaval that had shaken English society to its foundations. The day of the monastic system may have come to an end, but that system was far too deeply rooted in the hearts of Englishmen for its sudden extermination to leave anything but a blank in its place. And when the royal power strove to fill that blank with clergy hastily manufactured in a time of uncertain doctrines and general upheaval of faith, it is not surprising that the new order of men was not readily acceptable to a dazed and wondering countryside. For the actual reformation was essentially a matter of town growth, and its details were arranged by a very small number of divines, with Cranmer at their head. And meantime the rest of England looked on and marvelled and acquiesced in surly fashion enough with the new English Prayer Book, because they as yet understood little of all that it implied. Here and there, in Kent, in the Midlands, at Lewes in Sussex, in the Eastern Counties, even as far west as Devon, the new religion caught the fancy of a few influential and popular landlords, who, in the reaction under Queen Mary, roused their tenants in a short-lived rebellion against the attempt to restore the old faith to England. But again the mass of the people looked on unmoved, glad, maybe, to return to the religion of their fathers, and entirely opposed to anything that promised to break up the order and strong government for which they longed. The only result was to hasten on the unhappy religious persecutions of Mary's reign.

Many of those who suffered the fire and the stake in her day were Anabaptists, suspected as much for their socialism as for their heresy; many of them were either foreign refugees or connections of such persons, who had settled for the most part in the east and south-east of England near where they had first landed. This accounts for the fact that, next to the diocese of London, in which one hundred and twenty-eight persons were put to death, the greatest number (fifty-five) perished at Canterbury, and nearly as many at Norwich. In the other dioceses there were never more than seven victims,

and in some of them none at all. But the list of those who suffered was fairly comprehensive. Five bishops, twenty-one clergy, eight gentlemen, eighty-four artisans, a hundred labourers, fifty-five women, and four children died at the stake during four years of Mary's reign; and yet, at this wholesale "burning of the body to save the soul," as the queen honestly regarded it, the nation still looked on unmoved, with far less concern, probably, than it had seen the martyrdom of the abbots and monks in the days of Henry VIII.

People minded much more than what was, to them, a common mediæval, if un-English, dispensation—the threat of domination by the growing power of Spain. For the queen's marriage to Philip had not only lit the fires of Smithfield; it had brought the land face to face with the possibility of absorption in the Spanish Empire.

The loss of Calais, owing to the queen's obstinacy in supporting her husband's foreign policy, set the seal on Mary's unpopularity, and did more than anything else to popularize Protestantism among the illogical and unlearned citizens. "The mob shouted Amen to the prayers of the last Smithfield victims," though it had been ready enough to proclaim the justice of their fate four years before.

So the first half of the century died in gloom, with a queen who realized that her very zeal for the Church had become the cause for its growing unpopularity in England. The second half was to feel the dominating personality of her half-sister, and to see the triumph of a queen who, pagan herself at heart, was intent on making the new religion identical with progress in matters material and synonymous with order and strong government. When once the nation recognized that she would have no dealings with foreign princes, either in the way of marriage or of supporting them in Continental wars, her own popularity was secured. And incidentally a much more permanent result was achieved. For from her reign dates the fast-increasing insularity of England, and for the next two centuries the national

spirit takes the place of the cosmopolitanism that had been the legacy of the Norman Conquest.

Exercises

1. Sketch the state of Britain just before the Renaissance movement.
2. What features of modern life do we owe to the Renaissance movement ?
3. What were the social effects of the dissolution of the monasteries ? What machinery has to some extent replaced them in modern life ?

Chapter XIII

THE ENGLAND OF ELIZABETH

A.D. 1550–1600

NOW that we have struggled out of the dark forest of the earlier Tudor times, with its entanglement of religion and politics, and all the confusion inseparable from the great upheavals of those days, we emerge into the comparative sunshine of the "spacious days" of the last queen of her race. Elizabeth was the heir, and certainly the "beneficiary," of the troubled past, and there is much in the social England of her day to interest those who care more for the victories of peace than the triumphs of the sword.

Condition of the Countryside—Let us glance once more at the condition of the countryside after fifty years of Tudor rule. The land is still largely uncultivated. Sheep pastures and "bosky" acres, "not perceable with power of any starr," as Spencer says, cover a large part of the land. There are still no great towns outside London, but twenty-six small cities, of which Bristol, Norwich, Plymouth, Coventry are the most flourishing; and these are separated very efficiently by shockingly bad roads, "foule, long, and cumbersome," and still surrounded by their protecting walls and towers. To journey from one part of England to another was a serious matter, though Elizabeth made the practice popular. A satirist of the day paints a citizen saying a long farewell to all his friends before travelling "twelve miles or very little more" into the country, "as he had travelled to some new-found land." Some mitigation was offered by the commodious hostelries now to be found upon the route, with which a contemporary writer compares those

in London, where " of all inns in England there were none worse." Here a motley crew would gather—a great noble with his servants and his own bed; swashbucklers such as Falstaff; sailors new landed with tales of elephants tamed with burning glasses, hurrying " posts," paid at the rate of 6d. a mile, and obliged by law to get a fresh horse at the end of every fourteen miles.

Great forests, such as those of Arden and Sherwood, cover much of the land, but here and there we shall find tiny country villages, built round the " green," with its oak tree, its pond, and often its Maypole. " Poor pelting cottages, sheep-cotes, and mills," as Shakespeare calls them, are often all that are left of a thirteenth-century manor. Sometimes, on the outskirts of a little town, but oftener in splendid isolation, we shall find the pathetic ruins of monasteries and abbeys, with smashed windows, fallen roofs, and well-built refectories, used as sheds for cattle. Sometimes the broad corn-lands, so carefully cultivated by the monks, are turned into sheep-runs, or cut up into small holdings; and the once flourishing gardens around the fishponds lie desolate and overgrown with weeds. Here and there the old castles still rear their grey heads above hilly woods or park or cliff, but the new nobility for the most part chose to build in sheltered valleys, and there, as in the case of Penshurst, we still find the beautiful Elizabethan mansions that were fast taking the place of the grim castles of mediæval days.

Changes in Architecture—Nothing, perhaps, shows more effectively the changes in the social conditions of a nation, as well as its character of mind, than the development of its architecture. The vigorous Norman, with his sense of order and discipline, built strong, massive castles wherewith to overawe a conquered people; and because his religious sense was sturdy of fibre, he built also many a massive church and monastery.

The influence of the Crusades, with their vision of the " Gorgeous East," led at once to richer designs in archi-

tecture ; but in those days of faith it was the cathedrals rather than the castles that were rebuilt on those lines.

In the twelfth century these great churches were generally built in the form of a cross, with a square tower, and often a semi-circular apse, on the model of the Eastern basilicas. The church arches were finely sculptured, as were also doors and porches ; the rest of the building was left plain. Round arches, round pillars, bold sculpture and brilliant paintings are the characteristic of this vigorous period of downright, sturdy-minded builders.

The transition period begins in the later twelfth century, when we find at Canterbury, Oxford, Glastonbury, the tall, slender spires, finely moulded capitals, and shafted pillars of the Lancet or *Early English* period. The lancet window and arch, the dog-tooth ornamentation, and the moulded foliage all speak of a time when men were beginning to have leisure for something else besides fighting, and when their minds were possessed with the beauty of the unseen world.

As life became more complex we find the *Decorated* style, when the windows are divided into " lights," and the ornamentation of capitals with ball flowers or cup and flower, as at Exeter, Wells, and York, becomes free and flowing.

Then reaction sets in, and at the time that the Renaissance was beginning to recall men's minds to an older civilization, we get the more severe *Perpendicular* style, with its long, upright mullioned windows and panels. The roofs, in place of the pointed gables, are now often flat, square, and panelled, and panels, adorned with shields or other devices, adorn the walls.

So much for the churches ; but though until Tudor times they were the only buildings that really deserved to be treated as architecture, we must also notice the change in the building of houses. We have seen how, even in the castle, the " hall " was almost literally the house itself. Sometimes we find " pele " towers in the north of England, built in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with a basement for cattle, a stone stair to the

hall or " common room," sleeping rooms in the walls, a flat roof for the sentinel or guard.

In the fourteenth century we begin to find the " solar " or parlour above the hall, but the latter, divided from the kitchen and servants' quarters by a wooden screen, was still *the* room for all occasions. It was warmed by a fire on a central hearth, from which the smoke passed through a lantern in the roof. Again, as life grew richer and fuller, the houses of the fourteenth and fifteenth century reflect the change. Galleries for minstrels are built across the hall, a " dais," raised about six inches from the floor, carries the " high " table, where the family dine, slightly raised above their dependants at the long table below. Servants reach the kitchen, buttery, and pantry by an outside entrance at the end of the hall, as at the Oxford and Cambridge colleges nowadays.

The moat still is found for security, but the castle is fast extending its bounds, as the mediæval noble grows in wealth and prosperity. Extra rooms are built from two wings at right angles to the hall, forming with it three sides of a court. The fourth has a gatehouse, with projecting towers at the corners, and the access is over the moat by a drawbridge and portcullis, as at Haddon Hall.

The fifteenth century, after the long French war is over, desires something more in the way of elegance, and we find Italian influence in the projecting turrets, the new symmetry of the structure, the pointed heads to the windows. It remains for the Tudor period to show what could be done to improve domestic architecture. " If ever curious building did flourish in England, it is in these our years, wherein our workmen excel," says a contemporary writer. Some of the older features remain, such as the blocks at right angles for the kitchen and parlours, but these, with the gatehouse, are all built symmetrically. You would pass now through the gateway and porch across the hall to a doorway into another court or garden, round which are built rooms with one window looking into the court, the other on to the countryside. Groups of rooms for guests are common, and up

the carved shallow staircase the solar has become the Great Chamber, or the Long Gallery, used for music, and elaborately painted or otherwise decorated. Hampton Court, built by Wolsey for Henry VIII., shows how the old zeal for church building was expending itself upon luxurious mansions. Instead of moulded capitals and decorated chancel screens we now have fine large chimney-pieces, carved with coats of arms, badges, and emblems. Great logs burn on the hearth, kept together by "fire-dogs." The walls are covered with tapestry, embroidered with hunting or classical scenes, or with carved wooden panels.

The roofs are often of open timber, with windows filled with coloured glass high up in the wall. Ceilings of interlaced ribs of plaster, beautifully modelled, are common. All speak of wealth, peace, comfort, and convenience, though cleanliness is still of little account, and the Venetian ambassador could write disgustedly to the Senate of the "filth of these Elizabethan palaces."

Trade Prosperity—Much of the prosperity which built these mansions arose from new enterprise in trade conditions. In 1559, in the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, her minister, Cecil, could report dismally that "those who depend on the making of cloth are of worse condition to be quietly governed than the husbandmen."

This was, of course, the direct result of the upheavals and unrest of the previous thirty years. But the very thing that was England's undoing in this respect proved her commercial salvation. The religious ferment that had unsettled her own industries sent crowds of refugees to her shores from the Continent. Flemings from Flanders, with their looms for yarn, settled at Sandwich, and made felt hats at Bermondsey, and tapestry at Fulham. Dutchmen and Walloons, driven out by the religious decrees of Philip of Spain, made serges, silks, and beaver hats at Norwich, and lace at Honiton, while Huguenot lace-makers also settled in Bedfordshire. Skilled workmen from Liège made steel at Shotley Bridge, and Flemish

glass painters set up the windows of Lincoln's Inn Chapel. At Yarmouth Dutch Protestants taught how herrings might be cured. Most important of all, the immigrant Flemings taught the weavers of Yorkshire and the East Coast how to make cloth as good as the wool, which was still the best in the world.

Out of all this arose an outburst of foreign trade.

Foreign Trade—In mediæval days, when the land was almost entirely self-supporting, such trade had been small. Wool was about our only export; silks, furs, and fine dyed cloth, wine, spice, and tar our imports. Not until the Stuart period did England begin to compete with Western Europe, although a century later she was the great carrier of the world.

Until the year 1552 foreign trade had been largely in the hands of the Hanse merchants, a great confederation from the ports of Germany, who could take as their proud motto, "To navigate is necessary for us; to live is not." They had settlements at Bergen, Novgorod, and Bruges, and in London at the Steelyard, where they had handsome houses, halls, and gardens on the banks of the Thames.[1] These were dissolved in the reign of Elizabeth, and their place was taken by three great companies who were to be the founders of our foreign trade.

The Company of Merchant Adventurers "for the Discovery of Regions, Dominions, Islands, and Places unknown" had already hailed as its governor, Cabot, the explorer of Newfoundland, who at once set about opening up a trade with Russia. Before his death, in 1557, he had the joyful experience of seeing the *Serchethrift*, under Captain Stephen Burrough, set out upon the quest for a North-East passage to China.

"On the 27th of April, 1556," says Burrough, "Sebastian Cabot came aboard our pinnace at Gravesend, accompanied with divers gentlemen and gentlewomen, who, after they had viewed our pinnace, and tasted of such cheer as we could give them on board, they went on shore, giving to

[1] Cannon Street Station now stands upon the site.

our mariners right liberal rewards; and the good old gentleman, Master Cabot, gave to the poor most liberal alms, wishing them to pray for the good fortune and prosperous success of our vessel the *Serchethrift*. And then, at the sign of the *Christopher*, he and his friends banketted and made them that were in the company great cheer; and for very joy that he had to see the towardness of our intended discovery, he entered the dance himself among the rest of the young and lusty company." The old explorer was then eighty-six years of age.

The Company of Tripoli Merchants was formed to rival the trade of the Venice Company, whose fleet each year had sailed, laden with the spices, silks, ivories, and raisins of the East, to Bruges and Southampton, where they had formerly secured the whole market for Eastern trade. And near the end of this period a charter was given to the "Company of Eastland Merchants," the future East India Company, for trade with India.

Discoverers—Meantime the spirit of adventure and the thirst for gold, apart from mere trade considerations, had wakened in the breasts of Englishmen. "Gentlemen Adventurers" not only scoured the high seas and brought back rich plunder from Spanish or French merchantmen; they ventured further afield. Sir Francis Drake, the hero of Devon, sailed round the world with five small ships; Sir Humphrey Gilbert sailed his little ship, the *Squirrel*, across the Atlantic, and took possession of Newfoundland in the queen's name. Hawkins sailed to Sierra Leone, sacked Spanish towns, and brought back his boat crammed with African slaves. Frobisher reached Labrador, and thought he had discovered gold there. John Davis sailed round the coast of Greenland, and through the strait that bears his name, in his search for the North-West Passage that was to open the golden gates of India; and later on he discovered the Falkland Islands. Sir Walter Raleigh, one of the most typical figures of his time—scholar, soldier, courtier, poet, sailor, and historian—explored the eastern coast of North America, and called

the territory Virginia, in honour of a Virgin Queen. Later on he takes possession of Guinea, having brought to England from America, ten years earlier, the potato and the tobacco plant.

The Navy—It was in the spirit of men such as these that the great Spanish invasion was beaten off by a nation that, at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, possessed a tiny navy of thirty-four vessels (the largest of which was 1100 tons), carrying 837 guns and a little over 6000 men. Yet, in the feverish years immediately preceding the coming of the Armada, Sir John Hawkins set to work and raised the strength of the navy to more than five times the number of ships and more than twice the number of men. Even then it was only the splendid seamanship of the English sailors, helped, it is true, by a great storm, that saved Englishmen from disaster. As it was, their victory was complete. "Beaten and shuffled together from the Lizard to Calais," says Sir Francis Drake, "driven with squibs from their anchors, and chased out of sight of England about Scotland and Ireland, their invincible and dreadful navy, with all its great and terrible ostentation, did not, in all their sailing about England, so much as sink or take one ship, bark, pinnace, or cockboat of ours, or even burn so much as one sheep-cote on this land."

As for the army of those days, it was, strictly speaking, non-existent. But the *militia* of each county could turn out a fair number of men, yeomen and labourers, some skilled in archery, others in the use of the twenty-foot pike and hook-shaped bill. Firearms were clumsy enough. Mounted men used the *petronel*, or the long-barrelled *harquebus*, which took several minutes to fire. Two men were necessary to fire the heavy culverins or muskets, the barrels of which rested on an iron fork placed in the ground.

Elizabethan London.—A glance at the London of Shakespeare's day must end this brief review of Elizabethan England.

London had now become, far more than in mediæval days, the centre and mainspring of English life, the "fittest place by man that could be thought," as Drayton rather clumsily puts it. Enclosed within its ancient walls, it lies surrounded by great fields, such as Finsbury, the Archery Ground, where the young tradesmen come every evening to practise the craft of the bow, soon to be lost to England; Smithfield, where the horse markets are held, and the prentices have their sports; Spitalfields, with its market cross and space for artillery manœuvres.

Further west we find the pretty village of Chelsea, on the banks of a clean and smiling Thames, up which the swans float among the pleasure boats and barges, which are carrying gaily-dressed gallants and ladies to Westminster or Hampton Court. Beyond it to the north we come to the hamlet of Tyburn, where crowds flock from time to time, to see the hanging and quartering of gallant young priests, whose crime is the saying of the now forbidden Mass. For the days of persecution are by no means at an end. The minister Cecil still has his myrmidon Topcliffe, the torturer and "examiner of Papists," in active work; and already more than two hundred and thirty Catholics have met death for their faith since the Reformation began.

Returning citywards, we notice that the Strand, hitherto a very sloppy path beside the river, has been newly paved, chiefly for the benefit of the dwellers in the fine mansions that border it, with their gardens stretching to the river bank. Between the Temple Gardens and Whitefriars, the old home of the Augustinians, lies Alsatia, the lurking-place of felons fleeing from justice—professional cut-throats, bankrupts and coiners, and crowds of thieves—who only wait for darkness to settle over the unlighted city to issue forth and waylay the unwary or ill-armed traveller.

Across the river stands a curious hexagonal wooden building, to which folk are eagerly flocking in this early afternoon. It lies open to the sky, though the open "boxes" raised above the stage are roughly thatched with straw. It is the most popular theatre of the day,

for on its stage are performed the plays of a writer, scarcely known in his own time, but whose name is to thrill the whole world in future generations. See the " pit " or ground floor, crowded with jostling youths, prentices in their blue gowns reaching to the calves of their legs, munching apples, playing at cards, whistling, quarrelling till the woollen curtain draws apart, and the magic of the play stills them to spell-bound interest. In the boxes sit curled and perfumed gallants, wearing the new-fashioned full trunk breeches, slashed velvet tunics with silk " points," and embroidered velvet hats, with great bunches of feathers in them. Few women are there, for the queen, though no one loves a pageant better, sets the example in avoiding stage plays. But there is a sprinkling of the wives of citizens, who wear the compulsory " white knit caps of woollen yarn." They make up for this restriction, however, by the structure of the hair beneath, which a contemporary describes as " frizzled and crisped, laid out in wreaths and borders from ear to ear, propped with forks and wire," and " on the bolstered hair, which standeth crested round about their frontiers, they apply gold wreaths, bugles, and gew-gaws." To see this sort of thing at its best, however, we should visit Cheapside or Paternoster Row, where the goldsmiths and mercers show their wares, and there we notice that over the vast structure of hair only the married ladies wear hats ; the rest show a minute cap, or a net of gold or silver tissue. Here, too, in the fashionable part of the city, we shall see both men and women wearing enormous ruffs, stiffened by wires or starch. The stomachers of the women and the doublets of the men are alike peaked in front to emulate the figure of the thin, long-waisted queen. Below the women's waists stands out the " farthengale," an immense hoop or wheel, which drew out the skirt from just below the waist so as to form a kind of table round the hips. Men, too, stuffed their trunk-hose so as to make their hips stand out as much as possible, and decorated the padded surface with puffings and slashings. Stockings were adorned with clocks and open seams ; and high-heeled

shoes, described as "corked stilts," were coming into fashion in place of the embroidered "boot-hosen." A foreign visitor describes the English, by which he probably means the Londoners, as being "very inconstant and desirous of novelties, changing their fashions every year, both men and women."

This was one of the surest signs of a wealthy and leisured population, made restless and frivolous by the reaction from a period of unsettlement and upheaval.

Let us leave the crowd of fashionables and return for a moment to the city. Passing up Gracious Street, which we know as Gracechurch, we come to Fenchurch Street, with its haymarket, and Lombard Street, thronged with dark-skinned money-lenders; and passing the sign of the "Grasshopper," the house of Sir Thomas Gresham, we come by Cornhill to his noble erection, the Royal Exchange. The upper part of this in the daytime is empty of the gay folk who throng its stalls after nightfall; but in the piazza below there is a steady hum of voices, speaking in all languages, and discussing the prices of silk and pepper, raisins, and French wines.

Making our way on to St Paul's, we notice the newly enclosed pulpit at Paul's Cross, where public sermons are frequently to be heard, before entering the great building itself. At once an extraordinary hubbub meets our ear. The place is thronged with people, penniless gallants who have come to "dine with Duke Humphrey," as this morning perambulation is called; servants waiting to be hired, the wits of the well-known "Mermaid Tavern" exchanging jests, fops who have come to show off the latest fashion in doublets. Here is a needy poet fluttering his last inspiration eagerly before the eyes of a bored nobleman, whom he hopes to gain as patron; there a bronzed seaman, with short peaked beard, relates his adventures on the high seas to a spell-bound group. In that corner a "pursuivant," or sheriff's officer, lurks listening stealthily to the conversation of a quietly dressed gentleman, who may be a Jesuit in disguise. For the old faith is by no

means extinct, and there is still many a priest who is willing to risk his life to fan the waning flame in the hearts of his countrymen. There, too, is to be found the equally unpopular Puritan Nonconformist, who hates the attitude of compromise taken by the Anglican Church, and longs to exchange the statesmanship of that establishment for the fiercely narrow dogmatism of his own beliefs.

But now the great bell overhead is striking eleven, and the nobility and gentry hasten home to dine. The merchants take their meal an hour later. The food, which is eaten, as becomes a serious matter, in silence, is heavy and varied. "No day passes but they have not only beef, mutton, veal, lamb, kid, pork, coney, capon, pig, or so many of them as the season yields, but also fish in variety, venison, wild fowl, and sweets."

It may be noticed here that the neglect of the ancient rule of abstinence from meat on Fridays and other occasions had caused such a fall in the demand for fish that it became necessary to make a law that this food should be eaten on Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year. This was the more necessary because, in those days, fowls, pigeons, and game of all sorts were cheap and easy to obtain. Only the poorer people ate "white meats," such as cheese and butter and milk, and only the poorest subsisted on vegetables, grown in their own bit of garden, with beans, peas, and acorns in the country parts. But the poor townsman could usually get his fill by haunting the gates of the rich man's house, the serving-men of which were always ready to give away the surplus after they had dined on their master's leavings.

The meals, which lasted sometimes for two or three hours, were eaten without the aid of forks; and the copious drinking was from fine glass in the case of the rich, and from pewter in that of the poor. "The gentility," writes a contemporary, "as loathing the metals silver and gold, because of the plenty, chose generally the Venice glasses."

Exercises

1. Show how the social condition and character of a nation is revealed by its architecture, with special reference to modern times.
2. Describe a walk through Elizabethan London, and compare it briefly with the London of to-day.
3. Account for the trade prosperity of Tudor times.

SOME BOOKS TO BE CONSULTED OR READ

The *Chronicles* of Hall and Holinshed, Stow (contemporary).
Roper's *Life of Sir Thomas More* (contemporary).
More's *Utopia* (contemporary).
Lord Herbert's *History of Henry VIII.* (contemporary).
Gasquet's *Henry VIII. and the English Monasteries.*
Gairdner's *Calendar of State Papers.*
Hakluyt's *Collection of Voyages* (contemporary).
Ashley's *Economic History.*
Italian Renaissance in England. (Einstein.)
Harrison's *Description of England* (contemporary.)
Rye's *England as seen by Foreigners* (contemporary).
Struth's *Dress and Habits of the People of England.*
Stow's *Survey of London* (contemporary).
Grosse's *Military Antiquities.*
England under the Tudors. (Busch.)
Wheatley's *London Past and Present.*

Chapter XIV

ROYALIST AND ROUNDHEAD

A.D. 1600–1660

THE political keynote of the Stuart period may be taken as the passing of the governing power from King to Parliament, an extraordinary event enough when we remember that England alone, of all the continental kingdoms, saw this great change in the form of government. Its cause is to be looked for, not in any outside event, such as a foreign invasion, nor in any set of favourable conditions, such as the long minority of a child king; we shall find it in the changing character and lives of the people of Great Britain. It was, to begin with, an extraordinary reaction from the high-handed despotism of Tudor days; but what made it possible was not so much a dislike of tyranny in itself, as the knowledge of the power that comes from a national spirit of unity. It was this national spirit that had been the gift of the Tudors' despotism, little as they realized it, developing from the days, now a century ago, when the nation asked from Henry VII. the strong Government that should give them security after thirty years of civil war. In that atmosphere of security England had grown up, had learnt her own strength; and the sovereign who tried to rule a strong and united people as in the old days of weakness and disunion, was simply riding for a fall.

Many influences had contributed towards this education of a nation in freedom from the dictates of accepted custom. Liberty of thought cannot long be separated from liberty of action, and the Reformation, which had taught men how lightly authority could be set aside in matters of Church government, was not likely to end there.

The royal power might be overturned as readily as the ecclesiastical, an idea which was always in the mind of James I., and accounted for his iteration of the principle, " No bishop, no king," in his dealing with the Puritan Nonconformists.

The Stuarts, moreover, had despotism in their blood at a period when the day of despotism was dead. When James VI. of Scotland passed on his triumphal journey to be crowned James I. of England, he happened to see a pickpocket caught red-handed in the crowd, and at once gave orders that the man should be hanged without any kind of trial. The incident was typical of his attitude towards English law, at a time when the nation was strong enough to take its stand upon that law.

The Religious Question—In dealing with the religious question we find the same spirit. Toleration was not to be thought of. The Puritans were driven to leave the Anglican Church and to become Nonconformists by the king's indifference to their wishes ; and this at once laid them open to a persecution that sent many of them to find liberty of conscience in a new world. The Catholics, finding to their deep disappointment that the son of a Catholic mother was enforcing the laws against " recusancy," or refusal to attend the Anglican services, by heavy fines and imprisonment, earned his fear and hatred by an ill-judged attempt on the part of a small section of them to remove him and his Parliament from this world by means of gunpowder. That the plot itself was betrayed by Monteagle, a loyal Catholic, did not save the great mass of Catholics, who knew nothing of the matter. A "frenzy of horror and dread" was roused against them by a people who saw personified in Catholicism only the power of Spain, and all hope of toleration died out for at least the two succeeding centuries, as far as Catholics were concerned. And meantime the character of the nation was rapidly becoming modified by the Puritan element within the Anglican Church, and was profoundly influenced by the study of the English Bible, newly translated by the bishops, warmly recommended

by the king. "Its private study involved its private interpretation. Each reader, even if a Churchman, became in some sort a church to himself." [1] The result, apart from the "hundred sects and thousand doctrines" that almost immediately developed, accounts both directly and indirectly for the overthrow of the royal power during the next reign. Not that England as a whole was become Puritan in her sympathies. The country squires were the backbone of the Anglican Church and its bishops, and by their side stood the new nobility of James' creation, wealthy gentlemen who were eager to buy titles for a consideration from the needy king, and who were rich enough to keep up their new condition in much state and luxury. The late queen, except where her own personal wardrobe was concerned, had set an example of frugal living, which had now become unpopular enough.

Changes in Social Condition—1. The New Nobility—A ballad of the day paints, in a series of vivid pictures, the condition of an "old worshipful gentleman of Elizabethan days" keeping a "brave house at a bountiful rate," a porter to relieve the poor at the gate, a study full of learned books tended by a reverend chaplain, an old buttery hatch with its half-dozen "old cooks," a hall hung with pikes, guns and bows, in which he sits wrapped in his ancient coat of frieze, drinking his cup of sherry. With this he contrasts the state of the young courtier, his son, in the time of the Stuarts.

"With a new-fashioned hall built where the old one stood,
Hung round with new pictures, that do the poor no good,
With a fine marble chimney, where burns neither coal nor wood,
And a new smooth side-board, whereon never victuals stood.

With a new study stuffed full of pamphlets and plays,
And a new chaplain that swears faster than he prays,
With a new buttery hatch, that opens once in four or five days,
And a French cook to devise fine kickshaws and toys.

With a new fashion, when Christmas is drawing on,
On a journey to London straight we must all be gone.

[1] Trevelyan, *England under the Stuarts*.

And leave none to keep house but our new porter John,
Who relieves the poor with a thump on the back with a stone.

With new titles of honour bought with his father's old gold,
For which sundry of his ancestors' old manors are sold.
And this is the course most of our new gallants hold,
Which makes that good housekeeping is now grown so cold.
Among the young courtiers of the King,
Or the King's young courtiers."

2. The New Merchant Class—On the other hand, while some of the country gentlemen became nobles, others, younger sons of good families, became apprentices and either developed into the extremely influential merchants of the period, or joined the companies of Merchant Adventurers which, without any kind of Government sanction or protection, were scouring the high seas in their own ships and laying the foundation of future commerce in both East and West.

3. Colonies—To Virginia, left derelict since Raleigh had met his unhappy fate on the scaffold, a band of men of a different character, broken-down gallants and bankrupt courtiers, tempted by the old lure of gold, had followed Captain John Smith, and had there learnt the fundamental lesson of English colonization. "*Nothing is to be expected thence but by labour*" Smith had sent as his reply to a Government that pressed him for the fabulous treasures of the West; and the first founders of Jamestown, the future New York, learnt from him to "build, mow, thatch."

Royalist and Roundhead—At the period which marks the threshold of the Civil War between the Parliament and King we find an extraordinarily rapid growth in the Puritan element, owing first and foremost to the strong, though perforce silent, disapproval of the absolute rule of Charles I. during the eleven years that immediately preceded the declaration of war. By this time, indeed, the Puritans were almost identical with the Parliament, which is, of course, the reason why the king refused to call that Assembly together. They comprised the majority of the middle class—the merchants and trading

population and the yeomen of England. Opposed to them stood the Cavaliers or Royalists, comprising most of the peers and gentry of the north and west of England. The east and south, the commercial centres, on the whole, were on the side of reform and constitutional government.

To understand the social England of that day, apart from the political conditions of the time, we might take a typical character of each party, and consider these as representing one great body of people in the nation. Neither of them are extremists in religion, and we may take it that this was the case with the majority of Englishmen at that time, even during a conflict that used the watchwords of religion freely enough, and raged round a king who is popularly supposed to have died for the faith of the English Church.

The Royalist—First let us glance at the picture of the Royalist, as painted by himself in his memoirs and letters.

Sir Edmund Verney was a lad of twenty-two when he was first appointed as Gentleman of the Household to the thirteen-year-old Prince Charles, the future king. The extraordinary personal devotion which all the Stuarts, except James I., inspired was no exception in his case. "He was," says Lord Clarendon, "a man of great courage and of a very cheerful and generous nature, and confessedly valiant," and he had full need of these qualities in the path he was to tread.

In his religious convictions Verney was far more in sympathy with the frankly Protestant doctrine of the Puritans than with those of Archbishop Laud, who was doing his best to shape the Anglican Church upon the model of Rome while retaining entire independence of the Papacy. And in the same way, Colonel Hutchinson the type of the Roundhead gentleman of the day, cared rather for the cause of Parliament than for the grim and narrow doctrines of the party to which he belonged.

When he was able, Sir Edmund gladly escaped from Court to visit his country home, Claydon House, in

Buckinghamshire. He was a model landlord and took a great interest in the peasants on his estate. Hearing that a shed had fallen in the great storm he cannot rest till he hears that "his hovel fell upon no Christian creature." He is prepared to take any trouble to get good places for his people when out of work, and everyone in consequence turns to him for help. Now he is asked to find a good husband for a daughter, a rich wife for a son; now it is a wild young relative who has to be helped out of a scrape, and Sir Edmund, remembering his own lurid days at the University, is ready enough to do his best. From the description given of his clothes we may rightly conclude that the extravagance of the Court of James I. has not been altogether abolished in the days of his successor. His ordinary dress at Court is a crimson satin doublet, and scarlet hose laced with gold lace. Over this he wore a black velvet cloak lined with plush. On festive occasions his bill for clothes comes to two hundred and sixty pounds, and among them is included a suit of purple satin, a waistcoat and cap of cloth-of-gold, a doublet of soft chamois leather, Cordovan skins for a buff coat, real lace and valuable buttons.

An old print shows us both Sir Edmund Verney and his son Ralph sitting in the Long Parliament of 1640, dressed in doublets and hose and short cloaks, with broad felt hats and feathers. They were therefore present at the trial of Strafford, that loyal friend of Charles, whose mistaken attempts to support him in absolute rule brought about not only his own fall, but that of the master for whom he gave his life. Sir Edmund Verney, again, is typical of the feeling of a large part of the Royalist faction with regard to this nobleman, who was detested by many because of his high-handed measures, but respected as long as he was in the king's service.

During the Civil War father and son were fighting on opposite sides, giving again a striking example of an England torn in two by religious and party feeling. The state of unrest at the verge of the war is seen in

Sir Edmund's letter to his steward from York, where the king had taken up his position :

"I pray have a care of my house that rogues break not into it ; have store of bullet and powder, and get somebody to lodge in the house that may defend it if need be. Have my waggon in readiness if I should at any time send for it. Get in all such moneys as are owing you with all speed, for we shall certainly have a great war.

"Have a care of harvest, and God send us well to receive the blessing of and return thanks for it. I can say no more.

"YOUR LOVING MASTER."

Scarcely had that harvest been gathered in than the foreboding half-hinted at here was fulfilled. As Keeper of the Royal Standard this gallant gentleman had once declared that "by the Grace of God they that would wrest the Standard from his hand must first wrest his soul from his body." At the Battle of Edgehill, when the Royalists had become greatly disheartened and were inclined to retreat, Sir Edmund Verney, in a brave attempt to give them new heart for the attack, seized the Standard and "adventured with it into the thick of the foe." He was immediately surrounded by a throng of enemies, and, says his Memoirs, "was offered his life on condition that he would deliver the Standard. He answered that his life was his own, but that the Standard was his and their sovereign's, and he would not deliver it while he lived, and he hoped it would be rescued when he was dead ; selling it and his life at the rate of sixteen gentlemen which fell that day by his sword. The Standard was taken, and around its staff still clung the hand that had grasped it, faithful in death. On one of the fingers was the ring given to Sir Edmund by the king, and containing his miniature."

So died the man of whom it was said by one of his own time : "He was of the strictness and piety of a Puritan, of the charity of a Papist, of the civility of an

Englishman; whose family the King his Master would say was the model he would propose to a gentleman; whose carriage (behaviour) was such that he was called the only courtier that was not complained of."

The Roundhead Colonel Hutchinson—As Sir Edmund Verney may stand as the type of the Perfect Cavalier, so Colonel Hutchinson, one of those who signed the death warrant of King Charles, may show us the Roundhead at his best. His wife paints for us his portrait in her Letters and Memoirs:

"He was of middle stature, of a slender shape, his complexion fair, his hair of light brown, very thick in his youth, softer than the fairest silk and curling into great loose rings at the ends; his eyes of a lively grey . . . his chin something long and the mould of his face also . . . but withal he had a most amiable countenance that at the same time bespoke love and awe in all that saw him. He was apt for any bodily exercise and any that he did became him; he could dance admirably well, but neither in youth nor in riper years made any practice of it; he had skill in fencing such as became a gentleman; he had a great love of music and an excellent ear and judgment; he shot excellently with bows and guns and much used them for his exercise. He had great judgment in paintings, graving, sculpture and all liberal arts, and had many curiosities of value in all kinds.

"He took much pleasure in improvement of grounds, in planting groves and walks. Of country recreations he loved none but hawking, and in that was very eager for the time he used it, but soon left it off. He was wonderfully neat, cleanly and genteel in his habit, and had a very good fancy in it; but he left off very early the wearing of anything that was costly, yet in his plainest negligent habit appeared very much of a gentleman.

"His whole life was the rule of temperance in meat, drink, apparel, pleasure, and all those things that may be lawfully enjoyed. He had a certain activity of spirit which could never endure idleness either in himself

or others, and that made him eager for the time he indulged it, as well in pleasure as in business; indeed, though in youth he exercised innocent sports a little while, yet afterwards his business was his pleasure. But how intent soever he were in anything, how much soever it delighted him, he could freely and easily cast it away when God called him to something else."

The "Perfect Puritan"—In another context Mrs Hutchinson describes the character of the "perfect Puritan" in general:

"If any showed favour to any godly, honest persons, kept them company, relieved them in want, or protected them against violent or unjust oppression, he was a Puritan. If any gentleman in his country maintained the good laws of his land, or stood up for any public interest, for good order or government, he was a Puritan. Whoever was zealous for God's glory or worship—whoever could endure a sermon, modest habit or conversation, or anything good—all these were Puritans."

She describes how the name of Roundhead came to be applied to Puritans such as these:

"When Puritanism grew into a faction, the zealots distinguished themselves by several affectations of habit, looks and words. Among other affected habits, few of the Puritans wore their hair long enough to cover their ears, and the ministers and many others cut it close round their heads. . . . From this custom of wearing their hair, the name of Roundhead became the scornful term applied to the whole Parliament party."

Such Puritans as Hutchinson form a strong contrast to the self-seeking leaders and factions often known by that name. In the year 1646, "when he came to take his seat in the Long Parliament," writes his wife, "he found a very bitter spirit of discord and envy raging, and the Presbyterian faction was endeavouring a violent persecution against those who had, in so short a time, accomplished, by God's blessing, that victory which He was not pleased to bestow upon them. Colonel Hutchinson, who abhorred that malicious zeal and

imposing spirit which appeared in them, was soon taken notice of as one of the Independent faction."

Feeling towards Cromwell—The character of Oliver Cromwell, soon to hold the fate of England in his hands, did not inspire the Puritan party as a whole with the confidence or admiration conferred on him by his own particular faction. "The Colonel," says Mrs Hutchinson, "who was the freest man in the world from concealing truth, told him [Cromwell] . . . how much it would darken all his glories if he should become a slave to his own ambitions, and be guilty of what he gave the world just cause to suspect: and therefore he begged of him to wear his heart in his face and to scorn to delude his enemies, but to make use of his noble courage and to maintain what he believed to be just against all opposers.

"Cromwell made mighty professions of a sincere heart to him; but it is certain that for this and for such like plain dealing with him, he dreaded the Colonel, and made it his particular business to keep him out of the army. But the Colonel, desiring command, not to serve himself but his country, would not use that art he detested in others to procure his own advantage."

Again, in the view of Colonel Hutchinson, we see the reflection of the feeling of a large body of Puritans concerning the execution of the king:

"The gentlemen that were appointed his judges saw in a disposition so bent on the ruin of all that opposed him, and of all the righteous and just things they had contended for, that it was upon the consciences of many of them that if they did not execute justice upon him, God would require at their hands all the blood and desolation which should ensue by their suffering him to escape when God had brought him into their hands."

The Court of Richard Cromwell—After the death of the king, Colonel Hutchinson gladly retired to his country house, rejoicing that the breaking up of Cromwell's Parliament gave him a chance of quiet work among his own tenants. For the high-handed rule of the Lord

Protector he had little sympathy and still less for the weakness of his successor Richard.

" Richard was a peasant in his nature, though gentle and virtuous, and became not greatness. His Court was full of sin and vanity, true religion was now almost lost, and hypocrisy became an epidemic disease, to the sad grief of Colonel Hutchinson and all true-hearted Christians and gentlemen."

Here we have the best side of both Cavalier and Roundhead party. The worst was bad enough. The example set by Charles I. had done much to improve the reckless intemperance and immorality of the Court of James, but its influence still tainted the Cavalier throughout the country and brought upon him the thunders of Puritan spokesmen such as Prynne, who tried to get the king to forbid that his health should be drunk. " Is it not an affront to his Majesty to have his name profaned in every taphouse ? "

The fondness of the Stuarts for the stage, and especially the introduction for the first time of women actors, was another occasion for the lifting of the Puritan rod. It was said of Prynne at his trial that " though he knew that the Queen and the Lords of the Council were frequently present at these diversions, yet he had railed against plays, masques, dancing, Maypoles, Christmas-keeping, dressing houses with ivy, festivals, etc." Yet, two years after the publication of Prynne's hysterical diatribe, John Milton, also a Puritan, was writing *Comus*, most beautiful of masques, for the children of the Egerton family, including the young Lady Alice, to act.

But the extremists, as usual, overpowered the moderate party among the Puritans, and in 1643 we find all persons forbidden, under heavy penalties, to be present on " the Lord's Day "—the only public holiday left since the holy days of pre-Reformation times had been abolished—" at any wrestling, shooting, bowling, ringing of bells for pleasure, masques, wakes ' church-ale,' games, dancing, or other pastime." Four years later a monthly holiday was reluctantly granted " for scholars, servants and apprentices." In dress the two factions vied with

each other in maintaining contrasts. The Puritan wore a deep linen collar when the Cavalier wore a ruff, and a tiny band of white linen when the Cavalier fashion was a deep collar of lawn and lace. The Puritan wore black stockings when the gallants sported hose of every hue, and pointed shoes when the latter's were broad-toed. Cromwell's own appearance was untidy in the extreme. "His linen," says Warwick, "was plain and not very clean; there were specks of blood on his little band, not much larger than his collar; his hat had no hatband, and his sword stuck close to his side."

Puritanism in Scotland—By the time the accession of James to the English throne had nominally, at any rate, brought about the Union of England and Scotland, the power of the Kirk was already firmly established in the Lowlands. This Assembly, though religious in its origin, soon became political, standing forth as the upholder of the popular rights against the "royal prerogative." It was soon strong enough to measure swords with Archbishop Laud in his endeavour to force the Anglican religion upon a nation now firmly Presbyterian in spirit. Well might James warn the Archbishop that he "little kenned the stomach of that people"; for Laud's unceasing attempts to promote uniformity in the two kingdoms was the direct cause of the upheaval that led to the triumph of the Covenant and the downfall of the king.

Yet in spite of the years of turmoil the social condition of Scotland was advancing. It is true that the false economic ideas of the day approved of the shipping of thousands of peasant workers to the "plantations" of Ulster," leaving a land barren and uncultivated behind them. But in the country districts, in spite of the lack of timber, fine mansions are being built at the time, and in towns such as Edinburgh the streets are beginning to be paved and "houses of squared stone faced with boards" adorn the Canongate.

There are still, however, few windows of glass, "but the lining of boards has round holes shaped to men's heads." The baxters and brewers keep their stacks of

furze and heather in the very heart of the city, so that fires are frequent, and a little baker's boy of tender years is hung for setting a match to one of the piles. The side alleys are still dark and noisome and blocked by butchers' booths, and no man dares to walk unarmed in the black streets leading from the main thoroughfare of the city.

Exercises

1. Account for the growth of National Spirit at the period and describe its effects on the country.
2. What were the main changes of social condition ?
3. Compare a typical Royalist with a typical Roundhead, and explain what effect for good or evil each had on his country.

Chapter XV

ENGLAND AFTER THE RESTORATION

A.D. 1660–1700

THE Restoration brought about, as might be expected, a tremendous reaction from Puritanism in matters of practical life. At the same time, the intellectual interest of the people, first awakened over the problems of religion, expanded into many other regions, and we find life beginning to grow fuller and wider in many respects.

Cavaliers—The typical cavalier, as painted by the Puritan, is a fantastic, clever wastrel like the Duke of Buckingham, who even in Commonwealth days began to play the part for which he was afterwards to be famous.

"He caused himself," says a writer of the time, "to be made a Jack's Pudding coat, a little hat with a fox's tail in it, and adorned with cock's feathers. Sometimes he appeared in a wizard's mask, sometimes he had his face bedaubed with flour, sometimes with lamp-black, as the fancy took him. He had a stage erected at Charing Cross, where he was attended by violins and puppet-players. Every day he produced ballads of his own composition upon what passed in town. There he sang before several thousands of spectators, who every day came to see and hear him. And this he did in the midst of his enemies, whilst we were obliged to fly and to conceal ourselves in some hole or other." This exhibition took place on what was then a village green from which the cross erected by Edward I. had recently been torn down.

If we are inclined to be fanciful, however, we might see in the marriage of this fantastic person the beginnings of the drawing together of Cavalier and Puritan that was

in years to come to make England once more at one. He wedded the daughter of Fairfax, the Parliamentary general, a demure little Puritan maid, who must have found the lively manners of her lover a welcome contrast to the solemn faces of the rest of her household.

When the Restoration summoned Buckingham to court from his country squire life at Appleton, he flashed again upon the world under his most extravagant aspect as the typical Cavalier. He gambled, fenced, made love, wrote lyrics, and wasted his fortune in dress. At one time he electrified even the *blasé* court of Charles by his *Rehearsal*, a brilliant satire on the drama of the day, which not only introduced real personages, but dealt a death-blow at the absurdities of the "heroic" plays of the period.

The Puritan—For the type of all that is best in Puritanism after the Restoration we must look to John Milton, with his early training in music and literature, his love for "sweetest Shakespeare," and for the "pealing organ" and the "anthem clear" which had been put to silence under the Commonwealth.

Throughout the days of the Civil War Milton was busy with his pen fighting for civil and religious freedom, for freedom of social life, and freedom for the Press. His *Areopagitica*, which did so much to destroy the custom of "press licences," was aimed at Puritan narrow-mindedness as much as at Cavalier scurrilities. The "severe grandeur" of his *Paradise Lost*, the work of his later years, when it seemed his cause was lost, reflects all that is finest in the spirit of Puritanism when it had escaped from the bonds of religious bigotry.

More typical, perhaps, of the sturdy peasant Puritan of the day is the tinker preacher, John Bunyan, whose *Pilgrim's Progress* was to represent the religious faith of English yeomen and peasantry for many a long year.

The Plague—In the summer of 1665 there appeared in England the terrible visitation of plague that stands foremost among the many attacks of pestilence seen in

the country since mediæval days. An extremely dry winter and spring had left the subsoil full of poison germs, and between April and June plague was raging in London. In July the king and his court fled to Salisbury, a cordon was drawn round London to prevent the carrying of infection, and the plague-stricken city was given over to her doom. Among those who stayed to nurse the sick when king, clergy, and doctors had fled were many of the Nonconformist ministers who had lately been turned out of the livings they, in their turn, had taken over from the Anglican clergy at the Commonwealth. This is the description given by one of them of London during that dread August :

" Now people fall as thick as the leaves in autumn when they are shaken by a mighty wind. Now there is a dismal solitude in London streets ; every day looks with the face of a Sabbath day, observed with a greater solemnity than it used to be in the city. Now shops are shut up, people rare, and very few that walk about, insomuch that the grass begins to spring in some places, and a deep silence is in every place, espècially within the walls. No prancing horses, no rattling coaches, no calling in customers nor offering wares, no London cries sounding in the ears. If any voice be heard, it is the groans of dying persons breathing forth their last, and the funeral knells of them that are ready to be carried to their graves.

" Now shutting up of visited houses (there being so many) is at an end, and most of the well are mingled with the sick, which otherwise would have got no help.

" Now, in some places, where the people did generally stay, not one house in a hundred but what is affected, and in many houses half the family is swept away ; in some from the eldest to the youngest ; few escape but with the death of one or two. Never did so many husbands and wives die together ; never did so many parents carry their children with them to their grave, and go together into the same house under earth, who had lived together in the same house upon it.

" Now the nights are too short to bury the dead ; the

whole day, though at so great a length, is hardly sufficient to light the dead that fall thereon into their graves."

In those days trade with the outside world came necessarily to an end. Even in the country places, to which the infection soon spread, though to a lesser degree, the money for goods purchased was laid in a hollowed stone set by the wayside, and was exchanged for the goods laid upon it by the seller. One of these, the Broad Stone, is still to be seen at East Retford, as at Nottingham, and in other parts of England.

Inside the city further precautions had to be taken. "When anyone bought a joint of meat in the market, they would not take it out of the butcher's hand, but took it off the hook themselves. On the other hand, the butcher would not touch the money, but had it put into a pot full of vinegar, which he kept for that purpose."

September saw the empty streets ablaze with bonfires to purify the air. But the cold and wet of winter were of more avail for the killing of germs, and by the following spring the plague had almost died out.

Still, however, the germs were lurking among the dirty, insanitary houses and byways, and it was a blessing in disguise when, six months later, there broke out the Great Fire of London.

The Great Fire—"This fatal night," writes Evelyn, in his diary for September 2, "about ten, began that deplorable fire near Fish Street in London." Beginning at a baker's shop in Pudding Lane, the fire raged throughout the city for three days and nights, and is thus described by Evelyn, an eye-witness of the scene:

"The fire, having continued all this night (if I may call that night which was as light as day for ten miles round about), and driven by a fierce east wind in a very dry season, I saw the whole south part of the city burning from Cheapside to the Thames, and all along Cornhill, . . . and the fire was now taking hold of St Paul's Church. The conflagration was so universal and the people so astonished,

that from the beginning they hardly stirred to quench it, so that there was nothing heard nor seen but crying out and lamentation, and running about like distracted creatures without at all attempting to save their goods. It burned both in length and breadth, the Churches, Public Halls, Exchange, Hospitals, Monuments, and Ornaments, leaping after a wonderful manner from house to house and from street to street. . . . Here we saw the Thames covered with goods floating, and the carts carrying out to the fields, which for many miles were strewn with movables of all sorts. All the sky was of a fiery aspect, like the top of a burning oven, the light seen about forty miles round for many nights.

" God grant my eyes may never again behold the like, nor see above 10,000 houses all in one flame ; the noise and creaking and thunder of the impetuous flames ; the shrieking of women and children, the hurry of people, the fall of towers, houses and churches was like an hideous storm, and the air all about so hot and inflamed that at last one was not able to approach it. The clouds of smoke were dismal, and reached nearly fifty miles in length. London was, but is no more."

This picture of that terrible year is completed by Pepys, who writes on the last day of December 1666 :

" Thus ends this year of public wonder and mischief to this nation. Public matters in a most sad condition ; seamen discouraged for want of pay, and are becoming not to be governed ; nor, as matters are now, can any fleet go out next year. . . . A sad, vicious, negligent Court, and all sober men thus fearful of the ruin of the whole kingdom this next year, from which, Good Lord, deliver us ! "

He was writing on the threshold of the year that saw the Dutch fleet sail up the Thames to burn three of our warships and to carry off a fourth. " A dreadful spectacle," says Evelyn, " and a dishonour never to be wiped off."

But just as the threat of the Dutch brought about the creation of a navy, so the fire was the cause of the growth of a new London under the spell of the architect, Sir

Christopher Wren. "He restored London, and the noblest temple, the largest palace, the most sumptuous hospital in Britain are all works of the same hand," says Horace Walpole. Not only did he rebuild St Paul's Cathedral and more than fifty parish churches, of which St Stephen's, Walbrook, and St Mary-le-Bow are among the finest, but Greenwich Hospital, used as a royal palace by William III., Chelsea Hospital, Marlborough House, and the west tower of Westminster Abbey. The larger houses, wider streets, and greater spaces enclosed now began to encourage the citizens of London, as well as the country magnates, to pay more attention to interior decoration. The genius of this kind of work was Grinling Gibbons, who was discovered as a poor and unknown lad by Mr Evelyn.

"I found him," he says, "shut in a poor, solitary, thatched house in a field in our parish (of Deptford), near Sayes Court, but, looking in at the window, I perceived him carving that huge cartoon of Tintoret from Venice. . . . I asked if I might enter, and questioned him why he worked in such an obscure and lonesome place; he told me it was that he might apply himself to his profession without interruption. I asked him if he would not be willing to be made known to some great man, for that I believed it might turn to his profit. He answered that he was but a beginner as yet, but would not be sorry to sell off that piece . . . for £100. In good earnest, the very frame was worth the money, there being nothing in nature so tender and delicate as the flowers and festoons about it, and yet the work was very strong; in the piece were more than a hundred figures of men."

In most of our great historic houses, especially at Windsor and at Petworth, are to be seen examples of the skill of this unknown carver.

When a new London arose on the ashes of the old city, there came the opportunity for creating new parks and pleasure grounds. During the Commonwealth period the "field near the town called Hyde Park," which had been a racecourse and a fashionable resort under

Charles I., had been sold " for ready money," and divided among three purchasers, who made an income by levying a tax on the coaches that drove there The " newspaper," *Official Proceedings*, for the week April 27–May 4, 1654, reports: " Great resorts came to Hyde Park, many hundreds of rich coaches and gallants in attire, but most shameful powdered-hair men and painted and spotted women. . . . But His Highness the Lord Protector went not thither." Perhaps the reason why Cromwell did not frequent the Park was that " he and his partisans had shut up and seized on Spring Garden . . . leaving persons of the best quality only Mulberry Garden (now Buckingham Palace Gardens) as a place of refreshment to be exceedingly cheated at " (Evelyn's *Diary*).

These open spaces reverted to the Crown at the Restoration without more ado, and St James's Park was opened to the public by Charles II. ; and there the rank and fashion of the court were to be found feeding the waterfowl when they were not taking the air in Gray's Inn Gardens or hearing the nightingale sing in " Foxhall," often known as New Spring Garden.

The place of promenade for the ordinary citizen was either Lamb's Conduit Fields, off High Holborn, Hoxton Fields, or the Spa Fields at Clerkenwell.

On such occasions men as well as women of fashion carried large muffs, and wore large low hats with a bow at the side. The vest, or long waistcoat, was in fashion, and the tunic or loose coat with rows of gold buttons and gold braid. The vest was often tied with a sash, in which swung a sword. Little girls wore hanging sleeves, and boys long coats almost to their heels. A lady of fashion was known by her long train, cocked and plumed hat, a black patch here and there on face and chin, and long perfumed gloves.

In the days of the Merry Monarch breakfast still consisted of a draught of ale with bread and butter ; dinner was the chief meal, and was eaten at one o'clock. In 1667 we find Pepys noting in his *Diary* that his wife was brewing tea, " a drink which the Potticary tells her is good for her cold." Another writer tells of the fashion

of serving tea after dinner instead of wine—" a filthy custom ; a base, unworthy, Indian practice."

During the dark days of the Commonwealth supper had become a rare event, but after the Restoration, the rich would sit down to meat or fish, the poor to a drink of hot ale, before going to bed.

At meal-times manners were still far from " polite."

" On the English table," says a foreign visitor, " there are no forks. A beaker was set before each person, and at the end of the meal, each dips the end of his napkin therein, and with this they clean their teeth and wash their hands. At table the guests were all seated on chairs without backs, and wore their hats."

And Evelyn, writing to Pepys in 1689, says that England has much to learn from France as to " the civilities of giving or taking the wall, sitting down, entering in at or going out of the door, taking leave . . . and other encounters *à la cavalière* among the ladies. . . . The Italians and Spaniards exceed us infinitely in this point of good breeding. Nay, I observe our women of quality often put us to ' O Lord, Madam ! ' when we have nothing to fill up and reply."

The influence of the French court, however, on the opinions of the Royalist exiles is clearly seen after the Restoration in the education of boys and girls. Much greater attention was paid to accomplishments such as music, dancing, and fencing. The " Complete Gentleman " had still to finish his education abroad in order to learn " manners " ; but the scholars at Westminster and Eton were made to work hard at the classics. Latin was the language spoken in school hours, and essays had to be written in Hebrew and Arabic as well as in Greek.

The " higher education " of girls began to receive more attention, though exceptional characters, such as Lady Jane Grey, Margaret Roper, and Mrs Hutchinson had all along been able to go as far as their brothers along the path of learning. Boarding-schools at Hackney and Chelsea still taught little but dancing, painting, music, and French, but a studious girl in a literary home had

other chances. Evelyn, writing of a beloved daughter who died at nineteen, says: "She had collected and written out many of the most useful and judicious periods of the books she read in a kind of commonplace book. She had read and digested a considerable deal of history. The French tongue was as familiar to her as English, and she understood Italian."

The reign of Charles II. saw the birth of the English newspaper, though both the *Intelligencer* and the *News* were the direct descendants of the two official papers of the Commonwealth period.

Roger L'Estrange, the surveyor of the Press, who had the sole privilege of writing, printing, and publishing all such papers, declared in his prospectus that all newspapers are bad, because they make the public "too familiar with the actions and counsels of their superiors." But since the public were "not in their right wits," he must set aside his own opinion and bring them to reason "by judicious guidance." Two years later a rival, who had the ear of the king, started the *London Gazette*, and this he attempted to outdo with his *Observator*, written in dialogue, a form then just beginning to be popular.

Travelling became fashionable in the latter part of the century, though roads were still bad, even though the toll-bar system had been adopted. Stage coaches became the chief means of getting about, in spite of the outcry of those who declared they made men effeminate, destroyed horse-breeding, and deprived thousands of the means of livelihood. The "Flying Coach" took twelve hours to make the journey between London and Oxford. The roads were infested by highwaymen, and private coaches had to travel with a guard of mounted men and servants.

In London the citizens travelled by river when possible, to avoid the dirty streets, crowded with traffic. Evelyn, who was one of the commissioners for reforming buildings and streets, had a hand in ordering the paving of the way from St James's, "which was a quagmire," and also of the Haymarket about Piccadilly,

which at that time was still on the outskirts of London.

It was during the later Stuart period that we can notice a great stir in naval activity. Whatever may be thought of James II. as a king, there is no doubt as to his being a keen and capable naval commander. With the aid of Pepys, his Secretary of the Navy, he made many notable reforms. For the wooden ships of the day he had eleven thousand acres of waste land in the Forest of Dean planted with oak trees. It was he who granted a charter to the Hudson's Bay Company, and encouraged our merchant adventurers in every possible way; he built the first "bomb-vessel," for the throwing of shells; he reorganized the whole victualling of the Navy. After less than four years' rule as king he added about sixty vessels to the fleet, of which the *Britannia*, of 1715 tons, was the largest.

The chief importance of the period from the scholar's point of view is, however, the stride taken in the direction of scientific knowledge.

The Royal Society, first known as the "Invisible College," had met occasionally at Oxford and London, since its beginning in 1645. But in 1661 it was firmly established at Gresham College, with King Charles as a member, and Robert Boyle, the first to establish the law of relation between volume and pressure of gases, to make its doings famous. But the most well known of the Fellows of the Society is Sir Isaac Newton, who discovered the principle of universal gravitation through the fall of an apple from a tree.

The extraordinary and rapid changes which had taken place in the social history of the people during this century can, in conclusion, be best illustrated by a brief glimpse at the career of the University of Oxford. At the downfall of the Crown, the University, strongly Royalist in its tendencies, fell under the rule of a Parliamentary Commission, who proceeded to expel all those Heads and Fellows who would not swear to the Solemn League and Covenant.

The first body of "Visitors" were Presbyterian; and

Presbyterian customs and ways of thought, as well as Presbyterian officials, became the rule. A few years later these were ousted by the Independents, who imposed their rule upon Oxford, and by 1653 Cromwell himself was elected Chancellor and ruled the University with the same iron hand as had dealt with the Long Parliament. His methods and those of his assistant, William Prynne, who had lost his ears under Charles I. for his bitter attack upon Royalist manners, were drastic indeed. The use of the Church Service was forbidden; and those who refused to use the "Directory" instead in the college chapels were carried unceremoniously by soldiers five miles beyond the city boundaries. Nearly five hundred Fellows were ejected, as were their wives, by force; and the marvel is that in those years of upheaval and bitter strife there was any kind of learning preserved. Antony Wood, the Royalist, speaks bitterly of the state of social life there under the Puritans. "They would avoid a tavern and an alehouse, but yet send for their commodities to their respective chambers, and tiple and smoake till they were overcome with the creature. And yet of all men, none more than these were ready to censure the boone Royalist or any person that they saw go in and out of a tavern."

Clarendon, a more impartial critic, says, on the other hand, that Oxford "yielded a harvest of extraordinarily good and sound knowledge in all parts of learning; and many who were wickedly introduced applied themselves to the study of good learning and the practice of virtue, and had inclination to that duty and obedience they had been taught; so that when it pleased God to bring King Charles II. back to his throne, he found that University abounding in excellent learning."

Under the new régime Oxford "took care to restore all signs of monarchy, the Common Prayer, surplice and certain costumes . . . to reduce the University to the old methods of preaching and praying." Some even wore cassocks to drive out the "puritanical cut;" the books of Milton were publicly burnt. Perhaps the pursuit of learning suffered in the zeal for restoration.

"A lecture now and then was a great condescension," writes Stephen Penton, an undergraduate of the time, "but God's grace, the good example of my parents, and a natural love of virtue, secured me so far as to leave Oxford, though not made more learned, yet not much worse than I came thither."

The attempt of James II. to restore the Catholic faith to the University met with a stout opposition, which came to a head when the Catholic Bishop Parker was forced upon Magdalen as President. The king "rated" the Fellows like schoolboys. "I am king! I will be obeyed! Go to your chapel this instant and elect him. Let those who refuse look to it, for they shall feel the whole weight of my hand."

But the day had gone for the assertion of royal supremacy, and the triumph of James was short-lived. Not a single clergyman would join with Parker in thanking the king for a Declaration of Indulgence that nominally gave liberty of conscience to all. The resistance of a loyal and Royalist Oxford paved the way for the coming of William III.

These events, coming at the end of this century of turmoil and change, show what a long step had been taken towards the passing of the governing power from King to Parliament. It had also seen the passing of the "Merrie England" of the days of Elizabeth and James I. Puritanism had killed the sports on the village green, the cock-fighting and bear-baiting on holidays and Sundays, and the Civil War had turned the joyous prentice lads into soldiers. The middle classes, with their new responsibilities, the labourers, still ill-paid and downtrodden, had learnt to take their pleasures sadly. The nation, in the heyday of youth during the sixteenth century, had passed through the stormy period of its adolescence and had "grown up."

Exercises

1. What does modern England owe to the spirit of (*a*) the Cavalier, (*b*) the Puritan?

2. Show the social effects of the Plague and the Fire of London.

3. Sketch, if possible in diary form, the lives of Oxford collegians from 1650–1689.

SOME BOOKS TO BE CONSULTED OR READ

England under the Stuarts. (Trevelyan.)
Memoirs of the Court of England in the Stuart Period. (Jesse.)
The Fairfax Correspondence.
The Verney Memoirs.
Life of Colonel Hutchinson. By his Wife.
Oliver Cromwell and the Rule of Puritanism. (Firth.)
Documents of the Puritan Revolution. (Gardiner.)
History of the Commonwealth. (Gardiner.)
History of His Own Times. (Burnet.)
England under Charles II. (Taylor.)
Evelyn's *Diary.*
Pepys' *Diary.*
State of England. (Chamberlayne.)
Description of England. (Harrison.)

Chapter XVI

AN AGE OF PROSE

A.D. 1700–1800

IN contrast with the romantic episodes and violent upheavals of the seventeenth century, the eighteenth century stands as a commercial period, during which the British nation was slowly but surely advancing towards that liberty to which the period we have just been studying had opened the door. It was, in social life as in literature, an Age of Prose, marked by neat effects and leisurely procedure, and only towards its latter years does its orderliness suddenly collapse in the lurid crashes of American Independence and the French Revolution. That it escaped the far more drastic upheaval of society that shook France to its foundations in those years is due to the limitation of royal power, and the growth in Parliamentary responsibility, which, in spite of Georgian attempts at autocracy, remained as the legacy of the seventeenth century.

Gradual Change in Social Classes—One of the slow but steady changes seen by the eighteenth century was the gradual transference of power, especially in the House of Commons, from the autocratic landowners and country gentlemen to wealthy capitalists and employers of labour, who represented the mercantile and trading interests. This change was not accomplished till the nineteenth century; but we may note here certain indications of what was to come.

In the days of Queen Anne, during the first part of the century, the typical landlord was Sir Roger de Coverley, whose authority over his tenants is depicted for us by Addison as follows:

Sir Roger de Coverley and Class Authority—"As Sir Roger is landlord to the whole congregation, he keeps them in very good order, and will suffer no one to sleep in it beside himself; for if by chance he has been surprised into a short nap at sermon, upon recovering out of it, he stands up and looks about him, and if he sees anybody else nodding, either wakes them himself, or sends his servant to them.

"Several other of the old knight's peculiarities break out on these occasions. Sometimes he will be lengthening out a verse in the singing-psalm half a minute after the rest of the congregation have done with it, sometimes he stands up when everyone else is upon their knees, to count the congregation or see if any of his tenants are missing.

"I was yesterday very much surprised to hear my old friend, in the midst of the service, calling out to one John Matthews to mind what he was about, and not disturb the congregation. This John Matthews, it seems, is remarkable for being an idle fellow, and at that time was kicking his heels for his diversion.

"The authority of the knight, though exerted in that odd manner . . . has a very good effect upon the parish, who are not polite enough to see anything ridiculous in his behaviour.

"As soon as the sermon is finished, no one presumes to stir till Sir Roger is gone out of church. The knight walks down from his seat in the chancel between a double row of his tenants, that stand bowing to him on each side; and every now and then inquires how such an one's wife, or mother, or son, or father do, whom he does not see at church, which is understood as a secret reprimand to the person that is absent."

John Wilkes and Liberty—As might be expected, the first important attempts at emancipation from class tyranny came from the townsmen, not from the country peasants and farmers. The story of Wilkes and his paper, the *North Briton*, belongs perhaps to political history, but inasmuch as he is a typical representative of the temper of the citizen of London during the second

half of the century, he belongs to the social side as well. We find him voicing the popular detestation of the Scotsman, Lord Bute, and of his influence over George III. and the Princess Dowager. We see his rough face and awkward figure among the crowds who are ever present to hoot the Minister as his coach appears in the street. We find him indulging in open criticism of the king both from his seat in Parliament and in the pages of the *North Briton*.

We see him a sardonic victim of a king's unconstitutional command, imprisoned in the Tower, and insolently demanding release under a writ of *habeas corpus*. We see him followed by a petty persecution at the hands of George, who even tried, according to a fashion of the day, to get rid of him by forcing on him a duel with a professional antagonist. A little later, when he is again expelled from a House of Commons to which he has been returned by an overwhelming majority, he is able to split up England into factions and to make "Wilkes and Liberty" the war-cry of a nation. All London had spaces and walls defiantly chalked "No. 45," because in that number of his paper Wilkes had written his offending article; the town was illuminated when he was released from prison; later on he appears as sheriff of the city and then as lord mayor. When he could take his seat triumphantly at the next general election of 1774, the champion of liberty had struck a mortal blow at aristocratic prejudice and unconstitutional procedure.

Changes in Social Life—It has been truly said that far more changes in English life, customs and surroundings have taken place during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than happened in all the years between the Norman Conquest and the eighteenth century. We may notice some of these changes here.

Houses were beginning to be built with a greater number of windows, some of which were made, for the first time, to open. Panelling or paper began to replace the tapestry wall-hangings. China and decorative glass

used as ornaments became the fashion, together with beautiful ceilings, handsome chimney-pieces, elaborate fire-places. Furniture was still scanty. A few high-backed chairs, a long table, a square settee, were considered ample, though the wealthiest people might add one or two small Dutch tables. Bedsteads were beautifully carved, with posts and canopy to carry rich brocade and velvet hangings. The corner cupboard, with its glass doors displaying the delft posset cup or bowls of which the housewife was so proud, belongs to the period of Queen Anne. The Georgian houses were far more solid and square in shape, with fine broad staircases and good gardens.

Communication—Communication and means of travel remained slow and difficult throughout the century. The usual mode of travel for the poor was on horseback or in waggons; but during the period the "flying coaches" would do as much as sixty miles a day, though, as says a writer of the day, "they do not go to all places." For forty years they ran only by daylight, and it was considered a daring feat, in view of the fact that the roads were infested by highwaymen, when they undertook to travel on moonlight nights, and even, if necessary, in the dark. Six or eight horses were used, one of each pair, except the wheelers, being ridden by a postillion. The coach was a very cumbrous, leather-covered vehicle, with broad red wheels and a huge swaying "basket" at the back, where rode poor travellers and servants. For the first fifty years of the century a stage coach left London on Fridays for Liverpool, arriving there on Monday evenings. Not till 1752 did another long-distance "fast" coach run, and that was from London to Exeter, taking three days on the road. But the old Dover Road out of London was well-equipped in this respect, since the eighty-four miles were travelled in one day.

The mails were carried on horseback, and were often robbed. Such a notice as this was frequently to be seen: 'There were no Western letters yesterday, the Mail

being robbed between 11 and 12 o'clock at night between Crewkerne and Sherborne by one footpad who carried off the bag belonging to all the towns between Land's End and Yeovil." It was owing to the energy of Pitt that, in the year 1784, we find the mails conveyed not on horseback, but by coach with armed coachmen and "guards."

Love of Travel—In spite of inconvenient methods of travel, it is in this period that we first find the craze for "change of air" taking root among the well-to-do. Weymouth was made a popular resort when King George III. took to staying there for his health. Miss Fanny Burney gives us a lively picture of a phase of society in connexion with his visit there. "Gloucester House," she writes, "where the King is staying, is a straggling, inconvenient old house, but delightfully situated in a village, looking indeed at present like a populous town from the amazing concourse of people that have crowded into it. The bowmen and archers and buglers are to attend the King while he stays here, in all his rides. During the King's dinner, which was in a parlour looking into the garden, he permitted the people to come to the window, and their delight and rapture at seeing their monarch at table, with the evident hungry feeling it occasioned, made a contrast of admiration and deprivation truly comic. They crowded, however, so excessively that this can be permitted them no more. They broke down all the paling and much of the hedges, and some of the windows, and all by eagerness and multitude, for they were perfectly civil and well-behaved. . . . The King bathes and with great success; a machine follows the royal one into the sea filled with fiddlers, who play 'God save the King' as his Majesty takes his plunge."

The most fashionable "watering place" of the period, however, was Bath, made famous as such by the foresight and practical ability of a perfectly attired and distinguished-looking person of no particular claim to birth or consideration known as "Beau Nash." Long

after the visit of Queen Anne had established Bath waters as a health cure, Nash took the town in hand, pushed on the building of assembly rooms for dancing and entertainment, and saw that ample accommodation was provided for visitors in stately, well-built houses. Such details as the paving, lighting and draining of the streets added to the popularity of the place; and he did not disdain to be foremost among those who saw to the comfort of would-be dancers by pressing on the abolition of the wearing of swords, riding boots and spurs as part of full-dress in the ball-room. Nothing was too minute for his attention. The arrival of a stage coach of visitors was greeted by a peal of bells from the Abbey Tower. "Waits" sang or played in front of the houses each night; card-playing was encouraged, but only in public. But when in 1745 it became illegal to play games for money, the mismanagement of his assistants of the "Tables" where he had substituted a non-gambling game, led to his prosecution, and Beau Nash suffered oblivion and obscurity through his consistent endeavour to provide a pleasure-loving public with the amusements they craved.

Influence of French Revolution—Later on in the century we see the influence of the French Revolution beginning to tell on the people. During the long war which was its outcome, the poor suffered terribly from famine prices and heavy taxes. In 1795 when the king drove to the opening of Parliament, the mob pelted his carriage, crying! "Give us bread! No war! No famine!" which frightened the Government into forbidding meetings of more than fifty persons to be held without notice to a magistrate.

And meantime the rich and fashionable had to content themselves with going to bathe at Brighton instead of going abroad, and prided themselves on dutifully giving up puddings and pies at the instance of the Privy Council, and on eating "household bread" made largely of rye. The chief effect on them of the scarcity of flour was to make powder for the hair go out of fashion. Indeed,

following the example of Fox, always a prominent figure in the public eye, a style of neglect in dress came into vogue, and the younger men began to crop their hair. In 1791 we find Walpole declaring, "I do not know the present gentlemen by sight—the young men in their dirty shirts and shaggy hair have levelled nobility as much as the nobility in France have."

Pantaloons buttoned below the knee began to be worn, with Hessian boots, and wide-skirted sloped coats, which developed later into "tails." The short waists of the latter brought waistcoats into fashion. Round the neck was swathed the long muslin cravat. A tall hat, with small flat brim, and a "quizzing glass" completed the outfit of the "beau" of the period.

Such pictures as these portray the most characteristic features of a century which saw the more leisured and wealthy part of the population at play.

Far more important is the change that took place in the economic condition of the country. Let us look first at the changes that were taking place in the *face of the country*.

Gradually the iron-smelting industry had been transferred from the forest region of Sussex and Hampshire to the district of the Midland and Northern coalfields, since the south country has ceased to provide sufficient charcoal for smelting. Then the invention of machinery and the use of steam power came upon the scene and gradually brought about a complete change in the character of the population.

In earlier days, as we have seen, the manufacture of cloth and other commodities was in the hands of the Gilds. After these were suppressed it remained for a time scattered among a number of small manufacturers, a state of things that persisted throughout the century in the West Riding of Yorkshire, and is thus described: "The manufacture (of wool) is conducted by a multitude of master manufacturers, generally possessing a very small amount of capital. They buy the wool of the dealer; and in their own houses, assisted by their wives and children, and from two or three to six or seven journeymen, they dye it and work it into undressed

cloth. The manufacturer carries it on a market day to a public hall or market, where the merchants repair to purchase," as in the towns of Leeds, Bradford, Halifax or Huddersfield.

Now, however, there came along the "capitalist" clothier, with his factory and machinery, and the small "operator" went to the wall. At first these factories were almost paternal in their arrangements. In 1768 Arthur Young describes the woollen manufactory of Sir George Strickland at Baynton: "A noble undertaking which deserves the greatest praise. In this country the poor have no other employment than what results from a most imperfect agriculture. Consequently three-quarters of the women and children were not employed. It was this induced Sir George to found a building large enough to contain on one side a row of looms, and on the other a large space for the women and children to spin. This undertaking was once carried so far as to employ 150 hands."

The rise of the Factory system in its strict form belongs to the nineteenth century; and we must turn from its consideration to note the general effect upon the eighteenth century, both in town and country, of this economic change.

The peasants were already beginning to leave the country-side for places which had rapidly developed from straggling villages into large unsightly towns, whose hastily built houses, blocking out light and air, were the foundations of our modern slums. Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool were rising into great cities owing to the imports of silk, linen, and especially cotton; and merchants were growing wealthy at such a rate that they were able to buy up larger estates and gradually to exterminate the "small proprietor" or yeoman farmer, once the backbone of England. Arthur Young, indeed, tells us in 1793 that the latter "are become exceeding rare, owing to the building up of large estates between the years 1720-1785 by purchase by wealthy traders." Hence, as Swift puts it, "power which was used to follow land has now gone over to money."

It may be noticed how the brasses on many monuments set up in parish churches show the origin of the squire's wealth to have been his prosperity as "citizen" or "mercer."

One of the advantages of this change in a state of things that had scarcely been modified since mediæval days was an improvement in certain aspects of agricultural conditions. In the early years of the century there were very few large farms, so that the owners had little chance of becoming skilled in any one department, such as cattle-rearing, or the growing of fine corn, or dairy-farming. The "holdings" were still scattered—here a strip of pasture, there a strip of arable land, a stretch of common, a distant wood.

Neither good tools nor expensive implements were possible, and the net result was little more than self-sufficing.

Each household still brewed its own beer, spun its own wool, tanned its leather, ground its corn, baked its bread, killed and salted its own meat. The result was sometimes of the best; but more often it yielded a sour beer, hard black bread and tough salt meat that had been hung "from Michaelmas to Easter." The crops that were raised were very inferior, since the old methods of treating the soil were in use, and in place of change of crops and manure, each field lay fallow one year in every three. Much of the land was still uncultivated: a large part of the country was covered with fen and marsh, which lay under water in a wet winter.

About the year 1730 improvements came from the direction of Scotland, which was even less cultivated than England. There Lord Townshend, once Secretary of State with Walpole, was making experiments in turnip-growing; and though at first the farmers looked askance at them, the name of "Turnip Townshend," who discovered that the cultivation of roots and clover did away with the need for the triennial "fallow," was spoken more in admiration than in scorn before the century was over.

The needs of the population, which had nearly doubled

itself during the reign of George III., made reforms in agriculture absolutely necessary if England was to hold her own in time of war, and after 1760 we find from Arthur Young that "open fields and commons were mostly swept away," leading to more production of food, and especially an increase in the growing of corn.

Again we see a change in the face of the country in consequence of the growing foreign trade and consequent shipbuilding industry. At the beginning of the reign of George III. the most thickly populated parts of the kingdom were those containing the counties of Gloucester, Somerset, Wiltshire, Northampton, and Oxford—all agricultural districts, or those connected with the local trade in wool. When he died these regions were thinly populated, and the crowded parts were Middlesex and Lancashire, Staffordshire, and Warwick, while the great shipbuilding centres at the mouths of the Thames, Humber, Tyne, Forth and Clyde were growing like mushrooms in a night.

Great Institutions—Increase in foreign trade led, as we have seen, to a rapid growth in the Mercantile Marine. It was in the early years of the reign of George III. that an enterprising shopkeeper, called Lloyd, set up a register of ships; since then "Lloyds" has developed into a great central organization, wherein are recorded the class, name, tonnage, and owner of every trading ship, together with its movements, destination, and cargo.

The success of the Bank of England, founded by the Scotsman, William Paterson, in 1694, and the growing wealth of the country, led to a great extension of the system of banking. Money was no longer hoarded up a chimney or in a stocking, and the custom of "guarantees" in the form of cheques, instead of the passing of actual cash from hand to hand, was set on foot.

Investments were encouraged by the need of loans for war purposes; and out of these developed the enormous business of the Stock Exchange, where money could be bought and sold like any other commodity.

The Prison System—The reform of the Criminal Code belongs to the next century; the need for it, especially in connexion with the condition of the prisons, is well shown by eighteenth-century conditions. Prisons in those days were private institutions, the expenses of which were wrung from the unhappy inmates. These, who were for the most part debtors rather than criminals, were herded together in large underground cells, where they set up a republic, or rather a despotic state, where the strong and unscrupulous tyrannized over the weak, unchecked by the gaolers, whose business was merely to keep the doors shut upon them. Thousands of these unhappy people perished every year from "gaol fever," the natural outcome of crowded and insanitary conditions. On one occasion the infection spread from a single batch of prisoners caused the death of the lord mayor, the sheriff, several barristers and jurymen at the Old Bailey; and no magistrate ever sat upon a bench without a bunch of rosemary and rue to hold to his nose "against the fever."

It was Jeremy Bentham, the philosopher, who induced the Government to take over the prisons, and to put the inmates under more humane conditions, though little was done in this respect until the following century.

Social Progress—One advance in this direction was made in the increased care taken of the public health. All through the century small-pox had scourged both town and country, until in 1796 the discovery of vaccination by the surgeon, Edward Jenner, helped to assuage it, and when made compulsory, almost to exterminate it.

Two important societies grew out of the awakening of the public conscience on the health question, the Royal College of Surgeons and the Royal College of Physicians. Medical men trained under their auspices began gradually to take the place of that fearsome personage, the "chirurgeon" or barber-surgeon of earlier years.

Most of these matters belong rather to the era of Reform, and can only be touched on here. A less important though a more characteristic note of the

eighteenth century is the appearance of those weighty collections of information known as *Encyclopædias*. For this was, above all others, the period in which people wanted to know the *why* and *wherefore* of all things, and to have their curiosity satisfied with brief tablets of detailed facts, given in a neat, condensed form. One of these, the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, has survived to the present day, under vastly enlarged conditions.

More important in its influence on the social condition of the country was the appearance of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, our earliest valuable treatise on economics, which did much to correct the harmful restrictions on trade and production, hitherto considered so necessary.

This century saw also the birth of the novel, which, owing perhaps to the increased comfort of the homes, did much to counteract the custom of play-going, so popular in former years. The earliest of these stories, Richardson's *Pamela*, is told under the form of letters, a literary device which exactly suited a period when letter writing was a fine art, and occupied the greater part of the day of leisured people.

Another point of social interest in the literary world is the fact that this century saw the passing of " letters " from the tiny circle of " patrons " to the general public. In the first half of the century literary men wrote only for the former, and could only ensure the publication of their books if they could get a number of " patrons " and friends to subscribe towards the cost, and it was the custom to prefix a list of their names to the title page, accompanied by the author's letter of thanks. It was the scathing letter of Samuel Johnson, prefixed to the famous *Dictionary*, and addressed to his neglectful patron, Lord Chesterfield, which struck the death-blow to this miserable system.

A notable bookseller, John Newbery, was the first to provide books for children, hitherto an unknown luxury. Between the years 1720–1750 he opened a bookshop in St Paul's Churchyard, under the sign of the " Bible and Sun," where he combined the sale of books with that of

" cures." To the credit of his customers, be it said, that the former soon outweighed the latter, perhaps on account of his skill as an advertiser. Here is an example of it :

" According to Act of Parliament (neatly bound and gilt) a *Little Pretty Pocket Book*, intended for the instruction and amusement of little *Master Tommy* and pretty *Miss Polly* ; with an agreeable letter to each from *Jack the Giant Killer* ; as also a *Ball and Pincushion*, the use of which will infallibly make Tommy a good boy and Polly a good girl. To the whole is prefixed a letter on education, humbly addressed to all parents, guardians, governesses, etc., wherein rules are laid down for making their children *strong, healthy, virtuous, wise, and happy*."

This appeared in the *Morning Post* of June 18, 1740. An even more remarkable advertisement appeared in the last number of the *London Chronicle* for the year 1765 :

" The Philosophers, Politicians, Necromancers and the learned in every faculty are desired to observe that on the 1st of January, being New Year's Day (Oh that we may all lead new lives !) Mr Newbery intends to publish the following important volumes, bound and gilt, and hereby invites all his little friends who are good to call for them at the ' Bible and Sun ' in St Paul's Churchyard, but those who are naughty to have none."

Among these books were *Fables in Verse, Blossoms in Morality*, and *Little Goody Two Shoes*.

To Newbery also is due the credit of making the labour of learning more attractive to small people. He produced besides his books " a sett of fifty squares, with cuts and Directions for playing with them, newly invented for the use of Children. By which Alone, or with very little assistance they may learn to Spell, Read, Write, make Figures, and cast up any common sum in Arithmetic before they are old enough to be sent to School, and that by way of Amusement and Diversion."

Education—Such inventions must have been a boon in days when all education was made a matter of pain, both physical and mental. Few schools existed apart

from the great public schools, and these were mainly of the " Grammar School type," which, for the most part, did nothing but ram incomprehensible rules, learnt by heart in Latin, into the memories, but not the minds of the scholars. Hours of work were very long, beginning at five in summer and six in winter, with short breaks for meals at eight and twelve, and supper and bed at six. The child of the poor man, for whom there was practically no formal education, learnt more than his rich cousin while scaring crows, minding sheep, or weeding fields. But his unfortunate brother of the towns was often sent to work in a factory at the age of eight, or to climb the open chimneys that narrowed towards the top, in order to sweep the soot away. Not till 1803 was any reform thought of, and then it came only in the form of a society " for improving the situation of infant chimney-sweepers ! "

When these children were taught at all, and that was not till the close of the century, it was by aged men and women in the country-side, who were supposed to be unfit for anything else but to teach reading and writing to the juvenile poor.

We know the picture of the Dame School well ; the form set on the uneven floor of flags, the crowded row of boys and girls uneasily craning to look over the " horn-book," which is shared by half a dozen at a time, and which consists of a kind of square wooden battledore, upon which, under a layer of transparent horn, may be read the alphabet, the ten digits, and some " easy " words ; and on the other side, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Gloria. Upon a stool in the corner stands a culprit wearing the dunce's cap, or a long tongue of red flannel, to signify that he has not learnt the value of silence. In front of all sits the Dame in her full print dress and voluminous cap, brandishing the great birch-rod, by which she urges her scholars on the path of learning.

Education of Girls—A great feature of the century was the number of schools for girls of the wealthier classes,

who had formerly been taught for the most part at home. Far more attention was paid in these to the figure of the unfortunate child than to her mental capacity. For an hour at a time girls had to wear shoulder boards strapped tightly back to prevent them stooping. As late as 1830 a contemporary writer describes the schoolroom as a " refined Inquisition, where would be found stocks for the fingers and pulleys for the neck, with weights attached." Mary Somerville, the future astronomer, and even then one of the most promising of pupils, was sent to a boarding school for a year to learn to write and keep accounts. She describes the backboard, which drew back the shoulders till the blades met " ; and the steel collar, attached to a rod, which was fixed under the chin and worn all through the hours of school. She was set to learn columns of spelling from Johnson's *Dictionary*, and to write and " cipher." It was only when she returned home and was left to her own devices that she began really to educate herself, learning Latin, Greek, algebra, and geometry with increasing delight. One wonders if she ever looked back to the school days when she, a natural mathematical genius, strove with such arithmetic manuals as Cocker's famous treatise, calling itself " A plain and familiar method, suitable to the meanest capacity for the full understanding of that incomparable art " ; or a later one, the Universal Arithmetic, which taught the multiplication table by means of little rhymes, such as :

> " So five times eight were forty Scots,
> Who came from Aberdeen,
> And five times nine were forty-five,
> Which gave us all the spleen."

But for the most part a girl's time was occupied in learning the spinet, the harp, and " musical glasses," in modelling wax flowers or fruit, in working samplers or woollen flowers, or even in plain needlework.

An advertisement of a school for girls, in a newspaper of 1774, is as follows :

" At Buckingham, a pleasant and healthy situation.

the Boarding School for Young Ladies, by Mrs Whitney and proper Assistants, will be continued on the following terms:—Entrance, £1, 1s.; Board, Washing, Reading, Plain and Fine Needlework, £12, 12s. a year; Writing, 5s. a quarter; Dancing, 10s. 6d. a quarter; Entrance for ditto, 10s. 6d. Tea and sugar for the year, if required, £1, 1s."

The Methodists—We have seen how the first half of the eighteenth century was marked by the spirit of commercialism and material well-being, of which the deadness in the educational world was only one outcome. The same result appears in the religious history of the day. Little religious teaching could be looked for from a parson who held two or three livings, and hurried from one to the other on a Sunday, with his tattered black gown scarcely concealing his hunting breeches beneath.

In the latter part of the period, however, we find the beginnings of a religious revival which can only be compared to that awakened by the Friars of the thirteenth century.

Three young Oxford men, the brothers John and Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield, had earned, while still at college, from their flippant acquaintances the name of "Methodists," because they chose to live by rule or "method" rather than by the impulse of the moment.

Realizing the depths of ignorance in which the labourer lived his daily life, depths which the mediæval peasant, with his frequent instructions, many sermons, and mystery plays setting forth the truths of his religion, could never have known, this little band of leaders, with their followers, determined to carry a simple Gospel message throughout England.

To their office of teaching they added that of caring for the poor and sick and helping all who were in spiritual, mental, or bodily need, but their real aim was to rouse in the sleeping souls of God's poor a revival of religious life, according to the rule of the Gospel, and so to become the "Evangelists," or Messengers of Christ, of their own day. Unfortunately, though the Wesleys were clergymen of the Church of England, the Church would have

little to say to them, disapproving strongly of the fact that, for lack of clerical support, they had had to delegate much of the work of preaching to their lay followers.

Shut out from the orthodox pulpits, the "Methodists" or Wesleyans were almost forced into the formation of an isolated sect, and to adopt for their place of worship the village greens, the farmer's barn, the triangular space at the cross roads. "All the world is my parish," cried John Wesley, when his offer of assistance was scornfully refused by the resident parsons; and within a few years there were few towns, villages, or hamlets that were not familiar with his voice, whether uplifted in prayer, preaching, or the hymns so closely associated with his name and that of his brother Charles. In the pages of George Eliot's novel, *Adam Bede*, we see his influence working through the women whom he trained to go out to help the lost sheep of the country-side. From one end of England to the other ran the quickening fire of personal devotion and holiness. The social effect of the whole Evangelical Movement, of which it was the precursor, was important. It heralded the awakening of a nation to a new spirit, known by some as the "Romantic Movement," by others as the "Renascence of Wonder," which was to rouse England from the long sleep of materialism and indifference that had marked the whole of the Georgian period. And by its influence on the character of the English peasantry, to which it made its strongest appeal, it did much to bring about in peace an industrial revolution that had cost a sister nation a sea of tears and blood.

Exploration and Discovery—Desire for material comfort and gain, as well as the need of an outlet for the more restless spirits of an age that loved its ease by its own fireside, is illustrated in this century by the discoveries and exploits of some notable explorers. In 1739 all London turned out to welcome a long line of waggons loaded with Spanish treasure which passed under military escort from Spithead to London. In securing this Commodore Anson, the hero of the day, had had some incredible adventures. In the expedition

he had lost his whole fleet of eight vessels, retaining only a small Spanish prize ship, which, on the shore of the Ladrone Island, upon which his crew had landed, he proceeded to enlarge so as to hold all his men. Before he could accomplish an extraordinarily difficult task, his own boat, the *Centurion*, drifted back to shore, and with this he actually managed to pursue and capture a large Spanish ship loaded with the gold eventually brought to London.

Then we find a little Yorkshire apprentice running away from a draper's shop at Whitby and landing in the Royal Navy—a volunteer in a service into which so many men were forced, in those days of the "press-gang." By the year 1768 Cook was captain of the *Endeavour*, and was exploring New Zealand, Tasmania, and New South Wales. After a second voyage of three years' exploration, he attempted to find the North-West Passage to India, the siren that had lured to destruction so many of our heroic discoverers. Turned back by the solid ice of Behring Straits, Cook landed in the Sandwich Islands, where he perished by the blows of the natives in trying to settle a quarrel between them and his crew.

During the latter part of the century it occurred to the British Government to make use of lands so hardly won. An attempt to transfer breadfruit trees from Tahiti to the West Indies led to a mutiny among the crew. The captain and a few supporters were sent adrift in an open boat, and, strange to say, reached New Holland in safety. The mutineers took native wives from Tahiti and settled in Pitcairn's Island, where was found, many years later, in half savage conditions, a colony of fifty persons under the rule of John Adams, the ringleader and sole survivor of the mutineers.

Between 1780 and 1790 hundreds of convicted prisoners were shipped to New South Wales in order to found a colony there. Later on, Tasmania, or Van Dieman's Land, and West Australia were peopled in the same way. Sheep farming became the great industry of the prisoners, who gradually regained their freedom and settled down in a land which frequently saw them

respected landowners, capitalists, and the founders of wealthy families before their death.

Exercises

1. Give a description of character or incident that shows the growth of a spirit of independence in this century.

2. Note some important changes in economic conditions and say to what you think they were likely to lead in the next period.

3. Write a short essay on any aspect of Georgian England that particularly interests you.

Books to be consulted or read

History of England in the Eighteenth Century. (Lecky.)
England under the Hanoverians. (Grant Robertson.)
Hervey's *Memoirs.*
Walpole's *Memoirs.*
England in the Eighteenth Century. (Sydney.)
Georgian Period. (Paston.)

Chapter XVII

THE PERIOD OF REFORM

A.D. 1800–1850

WHEN we approach the nineteenth century we find ourselves faced with such a multiplicity of ideas and developments that it is obvious that their detailed history must be read elsewhere. Here we can but indicate the main lines of progress, and show to some degree the influence they exerted on the social life of England.

Changes in Society—The first thing we notice is the change that was taking place throughout the whole century in the relations between what used to be called the " classes " ; and in close connection with this stands the migration of the people from country to town.

Until the beginning of the century, in spite of the steadily increasing power of the wealthy merchant class, the country squire still held his own. Representing as he did the " lord " of the mediæval manor, he was the chief landowner in England ; his opinions controlled the Upper House of Parliament, and had much weight in the Lower. But the greater part of his time and all his interests were absorbed in country life and in the affairs of his tenants. We see his wife as the " Lady Bountiful," visiting the poor and sick, relieving their needs, admonishing their children, taking care that the young people of the estate should be trained in the stable or the pantry. We see his daughters holding night-schools for ignorant youth, teaching younger children their catechism and their alphabet, making flannel petticoats for the old women and bed-jackets for the infirm old men, reading aloud at their bedsides, making

rice puddings for their sustenance. And though to our modern ideas such a scheme of things savours of such uncomfortable words as "patronage" and "interference," we must remember that in a "patriarchal" condition of society it was considered that the rich man had his duty towards the poor just as much as the poor to the rich, and that the obligation to devote time and trouble to his dependant was as binding as the exaction of the respect and obedience due from the latter.

There was often found, indeed, the very closest bond of affection and confidence between the two classes. Few relations were more tender than that between the squire or the squire's lady and the old family servants—the nurse who had tended a generation of young masters and misses, the butler who had grown up with the patriarch of the family—who were pensioned off in a ripe old age to form a village aristocracy of their own. The relation is summed up in the wording of such an epitaph as the following:

"In memory of William Forder, who died July 21, 1817, aged 54 years. His honesty, fidelity, and strict attention to the interests of his master and mistress, Francis Fane, Esq., and Mrs Fane, for more than thirty years are here recorded in testimony of their approbation, and as an example to all whom Providence may place in a similar situation."

Even the black sheep of the village could count on the kindly judgment of the squire magistrate, and actual poverty was not often found under such benevolent, if autocratic, rule.

This village life lasted almost unchanged till 1850, and probably a good deal later, untouched by the effects of revolutions, Reform Bills, and railways; and till then the greater part of the population was country bred. In the days of the Crimean War the army was recruited not from townsmen but from peasants; "the peasant character was the national character." Even to this day "John Bull" is depicted as a mid-nineteenth-century farmer in coat and leggings that are now practically obsolete.

But meantime the rich merchant class was steadily growing in power and displacing the "small aristocrat," or squire; and along with that growth we note the gradual but marked increase in urban life.

The country squire was developing into a townsman with a country house in which he spent a few months of the year; the "people," left to their own resources and incited by the supposed wealth of the towns, began to flock thither. Houses, hastily and cheaply erected for their use, led to the abomination of slum dwellings, and all the social difficulties connected with the Housing Question. "The populace had forgotten the country," and did not seem inclined to be reminded of its existence, in spite of the occasional attempts made under the rallying cry of "Back to the land!"

This movement had its beginnings, of course, in the days of the Industrial Revolution, and went on steadily throughout the century. Thus we find Cobbett, in his *Rural Rides*, just before the Victorian Era, remarking: "At this old Romney there is a church fit to contain 1500 people, and there are for the people to live in 22 or 23 houses. And yet the vagabonds have the impudence to tell us that the population of England has vastly increased! Curious custom that depopulates Romney Marsh and peoples Bagshot Heath. It is an unnatural system . . . that must be destroyed."

But it would have taken more than Cobbett's fulminations to destroy it. Instead of destruction we find its natural outcome in the shrinking of the aristocratic class and the merging of it into what we call the Middle Class. On this we have again a contemporary opinion of Cobbett, who, writing to the nobility of England, says: "You feel that you are not the men that your grandfathers were . . . when you reflect that they would as soon have thought of dining with a chimney-sweep—ay, much sooner—than with any huckstering reptile who had amassed money by watching the turn of the market; that those grandfathers would have thought it no dishonour at all to sit at tables with farmers or even with labourers."

It is interesting to notice that one of the points made by Cobbett became even more strongly marked later on; for the line drawn between the rich and the poor was far more rigidly upheld in the latter years of the century, especially in towns, than in the earlier days, when the squire as a matter of course supped with his men at harvest-time and his lady led off the dance with the tenant farmer at the Christmas festivities.

Police Force—Another important effect of the movement of the people from country to town is seen in the immense growth of official administration and police control. In former days the "police" consisted of ancient watchmen, whose chief duty was to call the hour of the night and the condition of the weather as they went their rounds, lantern in hand; "street-keepers," who controlled the traffic; and the "runners," a kind of foot patrol to assist the Bow Street officers in their duties. When the new force was created, and put under the Home Secretary's control by Sir Robert Peel in 1829, the section represented by Cobbett, the opponent of all "middle-class innovations," furiously opposed what they termed a "military despotism," especially when dressed in a particular uniform.

The last effect of these changes that can be noted briefly here is the gradual rise of a minority of "capitalists," much influenced by the industrial conditions of the United States; and a huge majority comprising a "Labour" class. In the latter years of the century, and in the earlier ones of the twentieth century, these two divisions have practically swamped all others, and the old idea of "class," as representing "caste," has almost died out.

Industrial Revolution—One of the main causes of this vast change in society was the revolution in industrial conditions which took place between 1750 and 1815. The details must be read elsewhere, but, broadly speaking, it amounted to a change in system which substituted machines and factories for handwork and home industries. For example, in the mid-eighteenth century we

know that wool-spinning was done at home when it was too dark to work in the fields. In 1815 the whole country was dotted with water-mills and factories, where gathered no longer "craftsmen," but the masters who provided the buildings and the machinery and the "hands" who did the work. In place of the old apprentice system, carefully safeguarded in the interests of the lads, we have what amounted to a white slavery system, when thousands of pauper children, boys and girls, some of them six years old, were sent in wagon loads each year to become toilers at the mill. What this meant we can realize better if we remember that Peel's "reform" of the apprentice system in 1802 limited the hours of work to twelve, exclusive of meals, forbad night work, and insisted on some kind of instruction being given. But it took the cry of a woman-poet and her question—

"Do you hear the children crying, O my brothers?"

to wake nineteenth-century England to the full iniquity of her treatment of child slaves. In 1833, by the influence of the future Lord Shaftesbury, the work-hours of children under thirteen were limited to eight, in spite of an opposition party which saw in the measure the ruin of English trade.

Again, in 1740 there was practically no cotton trade at all. Thirty years later the invention of Hargreaves' "Spinning Jenny" had set twenty thousand hand jennies of eighty spindles each to work. The improvements made by Arkwright's frame and Crompton's mule went further, and took the work from the hand-spinner to the machine. The country stood aghast as they listened to the ballad of the day:

"Come all ye master Combers, and hear of our Big Ben,
Who'll comb more wool in one day than fifty of your men."

The first mills had depended on water power, but Watt's discoveries of the power of condensed steam sent them to the coal-fields. Great towns sprang up in answer to the demand for labour. Manchester, for example,

which at the beginning of the previous century was a small town of 12,000 people, held 140,000 a hundred years later.

And meantime, while the manufacturers grew rich, and granted more or less cheerfully the huge loans imposed by the late war, the workers suffered under bad conditions of life, poor pay, and the exaction of heavy taxes on such necessaries as bread, boots, and salt.

It was small wonder that the latter began to look back to the days when one little family of orphan sisters—the Tomlinsons—could pay the rent of a farm and keep three cows and a horse, and a field in corn, by the produce of their five hand-spinning wheels; small wonder that between the years 1811–1815 we hear of disturbances in Yorkshire organized against the new mills, of a manufacturer shot, and of many a poor wretch hung in chains for an attempt to fire Cartwright's factory. In other parts of the country we hear of riots and rick-burnings, and the state of tension between the worker and the employer is seen in the fact that the first attempt at a trade union was declared to be a "conspiracy in restraint of trade," and the members were prosecuted. The bad winter of 1816 sent a crowd of discontented Londoners, led by Thistlewood and Watson, to threaten the Royal Exchange, but these were easily dispersed.

In 1819 a peaceful meeting called at St Peter's Fields, Manchester, to consider grievances, was dispersed by military force, and several people were wounded and killed. The Six Acts, aimed at the holding of public meetings and the liberty of the Press, tried to suppress all expression of opinion; the people, unorganized and underfed, were for the time crushed. Thistlewood's conspiracy to assassinate the principal ministers of State, and to raise the populace against the Throne itself, made the "republican" spirit even more hateful to the secure middle class. Yet even the latter were beginning to be aware of dangerous conditions both in court and countryside. The French Revolution was by no means forgotten, and the disgust aroused by the treatment of

Queen Caroline by George IV. had not made crowned heads popular with any but a small section of a corrupt court.

Growth of Middle-class Power. The Reform Act of 1832—All this tended directly to strengthen the position of the class which stood between the fast-disappearing aristocracy and the bullied, underfed "proletariat," and the consequence is seen in the Reform Bill of 1832, which put the power of reform into the hands of a class now well awake to its need. The position of affairs may be illustrated by the speech of one who was then known as "Mr" Macaulay. Describing the visible signs of intelligence and energy of Englishmen in the manufactures, roads, canals, etc., of the past few years, he says: "Can there be stronger contrast than that which exists between the beauty, completeness, speed with which every process is performed in our factories, and the awkwardness, rudeness, slowness, and uncertainty of the apparatus by which offences are punished and rights vindicated? Look at that series of penal statutes, the most bloody and most inefficient in the world . . . at the mummery of fines and recoveries, at the chaos of precedents at the bottomless pit of Chancery! . . . Surely we see that the barbarism (of mediæval days) belongs to the Government and the civilization to the people."

So was passed, after many vicissitudes, an Act which took the power of making a new England from the hands of a class too indifferent or too ignorant to wield it, and placed it in those of a section of society that was obliged, for its own security, to be on the side of real reform.

Reform of Penal Laws—As Macaulay had indicated, there was one pressing need. Until 1832 death was the penalty for horse- and sheep-stealing, for larceny, for coining. A hungry person who stole a loaf of bread, a child of twelve who had stolen a purse, were both hung in the early years of the century. But the usual effect

upon a jury of such a code was to make it unwilling to condemn at all; and the consequent uncertainty of punishment made it well worth while to take the risk. In their wish to avoid the death penalty, judges fell back upon the alternative of transportation. Thus we know that in the year 1824, while 1066 persons were condemned to death, only forty were actually executed; the rest were sent to a ghastly existence either in the hulks, or as slaves in the swamps of Virginia. The more fortunate were transported to Australia, but even these were treated as slaves, and the result of an inquiry both abroad and at home revealed a shocking story of chains, dens, and the gaoler's lash. "Let a man be what he will," said one victim of the system to a magistrate, "when he comes out here he is soon as bad as all the rest; the heart of a man is taken from him and there is given him instead the life of a beast."

At home things were even worse. At the end of the eighteenth century John Howard's visits to the prisoners revealed a system of rapacious gaolers, who depended for their wages on the fees wrung from prisoners. Even those declared innocent by the judge were dragged back to prison because they could not pay the gaoler. Men, often innocent of crime or unfortunate debtors, were fettered in order to extort fees for releasing them; deprived of light because of the window tax, and of water because it was dear; exposed to the bullying of old gaol-birds, who made them "pay or strip," and if they could not pay, tore the clothes from their backs and left them to the miseries of a filthy corner of a stone cellar, barred from the fire and food claimed by their tormentors.

The reforms set on foot by Howard were stopped by Government, in spite of the popular feeling roused by the sight of Mrs Fry and other gentle Quakers, who strove by personal help to improve the conditions of the miserable inmates of Newgate. It was not till three years after the Reform Bill that the separate cell system, persistently advocated by Jeremy Bentham, came about. His special idea of the "Panopticon," so contrived that

the inmates could "be within reach of inspection during every moment of their lives"—a circular iron cage glazed with "a glass lantern as large as Ranelagh," with cells on the outer circumference—materialized as Millbank Prison, lacking most of these features, it is true, but an immense improvement on the horrors of Newgate.

Not until 1868 did executions in public cease; before that time it was the custom to take children of all classes to see the sight, in the pretence that it might act as an "awful example" to the young. After 1838 the number of convicts transported abroad was much decreased; by 1841 capital punishment was inflicted for murder alone. As the century progressed the number of criminals each year rapidly diminished, a fact due to the good working of the police system, as much as to the more certain, if more humane, penalties.

Free Trade—Then measures of reform in the price of necessaries led to more settled conditions of life. When it was impossible to get food for a starving family men were driven to reckless thieving and lives of crime.

In the year 1815, when peace was declared, an old Corn Law of 1670 was in force, which forbade foreign wheat to be imported till English corn stood at 80s. the quarter. This meant that the quartern loaf still cost one and tenpence, as during the war, and with a tax on salt of fifteen shillings a bushel, butter at two shillings a pound, and meat a luxury only for the rich, we find the poor actually living on nettles and weeds. At the time when Cobbett was asked to use his influence to keep the "masses" quiet and content, the wages of a Sussex labourer were one and sixpence a day, or sevenpence for himself and a gallon loaf for each one of his family per week. This was less than the allowance for a prisoner, and it was said with bitter truth that "honest labour received less food than felons."

For thirty years there was no improvement, and the latter years might well be called the "Hungry Forties." No wonder we find Bread Riots, when food-stalls and

granaries were raided by mothers carrying away corn in their aprons to feed their starving children. Only gradually did Parliament realize that a free exchange of goods under conditions then prevailing was to the national advantage. For England was then the workshop of the world, and her imports might well have either paid for her manufactures, or provided the raw material for them. Yet so little was this understood, that even in 1841 Sir Robert Peel's half-hearted suggestion for a "sliding scale" of tariffs on wheat was hotly opposed by the Young England Party, headed by "Mr Disraeli" and Lord John Manners.

But not long before this a movement, too strong to be resisted, had been set on foot by the merchant employers of labour, both for their own sakes and for that of those whose work was essential to them. The Free Trade Propaganda had begun in Manchester, where a Free Trade Hall was built on the site of the "Battle of Peterloo." The terrible Irish famine of 1845 settled the matter; and the abolition of the Corn Laws was brought about by an Act of 1846, but really by the "common-sense arguments" of Richard Cobden and the oratory of John Bright. The strong feeling of the country on this burning question may be seen in the frantic comments made by the Press on the fact that "H.R.H. the Prince Consort, attended by the Master of the Horse, appeared and took his seat in the body of the House to listen to the statement (on the Repeal of the Corn Law) of the First Minister. It was necessary for the Queen to explain that the Prince only went, as the Prince of Wales and the Queen's other sons do, for once, to hear a fine debate, which is so useful for princes. But this, of course, he was unable to do again."

One of the many effects of Free Trade was to send down the cost of provisions 30 per cent. in ten years; and though there was still much distress and very low wages in the agricultural districts, a period of prosperity set in about 1852, which did much to restore the balance and to place towns and country districts on something of the same footing. For though wages in the towns

were higher, there was the country custom of "allowances" of fuel, beer, milk, and sometimes cottages rent free.

Chartists—These, however, were still at the will of the landlords, and so, uncertain enough; the improved condition of England in the later years of the century must be traced directly to the extension of the Franchise. This was the demand of the Chartists, who, well aware that the Reform Act of 1832 affected only the well-to-do middle class, stirred up a movement for extending the right of the vote to the wage-earning class and the agricultural population. "There is your Charter! Stick to it!" cried the agitator O'Connell to his supporters, men of the town, not of the countryside. It demanded six points, most of which have now been conceded after sixty years of waiting. They were—manhood suffrage, annual parliaments, vote by ballot, abolition of property qualifications, payment of members, equal electoral districts.

While many of the Chartists were men of education and position, some were mere political agitators, others men of theory, the ancestors of the Socialists of later days. Their hatred of the now dominant middle class was shown in riots and insurrections, as at Newport, where ten of their number were killed and fifty wounded, while Frost, their leader, was sentenced to transportation for life. The second French Revolution revived the movement once again, and at a great meeting called by them at Kennington Common in favour of republican theories, we find that one of the special constables called out for the occasion was Prince Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, soon to be himself crowned Emperor of France.

The Chartist movement died out after the abolition of the Corn Laws, killed by the fall in the price of bread; and when, in 1867, Disraeli's Bill gave the Franchise to all male householders and lodgers in the Parliamentary boroughs, it was for a time without effect, for the English working classes were without political organization.

In 1884 the vote was given to agricultural labourers,

and the ideal of the Chartists was fully realized by the Representation of the People Act of 1917.

The Poor Law—Another reform which had a marked effect on the social condition of the people was that of the Poor Law.

Under the old system, a legacy from the time of Elizabeth, "relief" was given by such persons as the country squire, farmer, or tradesman with very little inquiry as to circumstances. Favouritism was rampant, and it was a common practice for the illiterate daughter of the farmer or tradesman to give out "doles" to those who were in need because they were systematically underpaid by her own father. The root of the system was the supplementing of wages by parish help, and it was often profitable for a labourer to take a light post for a low wage, which he could bring up to the average by application to the overseer. In the registers we find such records as, "paid to six men for standing in the pound five days, 7s." As the rates rose, the self-respect of the peasant fell, often to zero; and the "pauper became the support of the beerhouse." The Act of 1834 reformed this to some extent by enacting that outdoor relief should only be given to the aged, and that the workhouse should be the fate of the able-bodied paupers, where the wives were separated from their husbands, children apprenticed, and the pauper himself deprived of all rights. The rates fell in consequence, and pauperism diminished; but such legislation was scarcely ideal and often most unjust in case of honest misfortune. In 1871 the Poor Law Board was merged into the Local Government Board, with marked improvement in the conditions both of the "Unions" and their former occupants. The real reform of pauperism was, of course, the payment of a maintenance wage or "living" wage by the employer; and this was left for the Trade Unions to bring about in the latter part of the century.

The Great Exhibition—The year 1851 saw the Great Exhibition opened by Prince Albert in Hyde Park, an

event which was thought to usher in a period of universal peace. Its aim, as stated by the opener, was "to give the world a true test, a living picture of the point of industrial development at which the whole of mankind had arrived, and a new starting-point from which all nations will be able to direct their further exertions."

The pomposity of the statement made the Exhibition deservedly the butt of the jeers of *Punch*, then, as now, the truest representative of popular opinion. But there was a certain amount of truth in it all the same. The first half of the century had given the world a period of industrial prosperity, of which Britain was to a great extent the centre; and the most important effect, perhaps, of this was to free the minds of men from the preoccupation of finding the necessaries of existence, and to turn them to the world of thought and invention. On the growth of mechanical science had been based the growth of industrial prosperity, and we begin to realize at this mid-period of the century the truth of the saying, "In all these (industrial and mechanical) appliances, the man of the latter part of the eighteenth century was less widely removed from the England of the days of the Paston letters than we are removed from the ways of the eighteenth century." (*Justin M'Carthy.*)

Exercises

1. Give three causes for the increasing power of the Middle Class during the first half of the century.
2. Describe fully any two of the reforms brought about.
3. Give an account of the Industrial Revolution, and trace its effects as far as you can.

Chapter XVIII

PROGRESS

A.D. 1850–1900

IF "Reform" is the keynote of the first half of the nineteenth century, "Progress" may be taken as that of the latter half. During these years the spirit of democracy, the demands of the People, were slowly but surely making themselves heard; and those great movements we have yet to mention, though their origin is found in many cases in the earlier period, were all in themselves democratic in character.

The Railway System—Look at the effect of the railways on social life. The old coach system was essentially suitable only for the wealthy; the poor man stayed at home, or went afoot, with occasional lifts in a carrier's cart. The south of England was less familiar ground to the northern labourer than are the mountains of Switzerland to the domestic servant of to-day. Not that the railway system was invented for the benefit of the worker. A writer of the time tells us that the third-class passenger up to 1845 had no legal status at all. Many companies would not carry him at any price; others put him in an open goods truck, with movable seats placed across it, and charged him 1½d. a mile for the luxury. He was conveyed with other "unclean animals" by cattle trains, he was shunted about in his bufferless box for hours, and when at last he reached his destination, it was to see a notice that "the company's servants are strictly ordered not to porter for wagon passengers."

This was, however, altered by the "Cheap Trains Act" of 1844, by which it was enacted that "on every line one train each way daily must be run at an inclusive speed of

not less than twelve miles an hour, conveying passengers in covered carriages at a penny a mile."

It was soon found that the third-class passengers brought in the real profit of the system, and one triumph for democracy was assured.

This was all the more imperative, because the early history of our railways is bound up with the story of the collier's son, George Stephenson, one of a family of eight, living in one room of a cottage, and too poor to get the chance of learning to read and write. His career as an engineer was a victory over adverse fate, and in 1814 he constructed "Blucher," a road locomotive for carrying coal from the mines. In 1823 he was appointed engineer to the Stockton and Darlington railway, intended for the conveyance of coal by horse haulage or stationary engines; and in that same year his representations gained from Parliament the sanction for a line forty miles long. The British public stood aghast when they heard that Stephenson proposed to run locomotive steam engines on these lines. When, in 1825, a line was proposed to run to Woolwich, a dismayed reviewer wrote in the *Quarterly*: "The gross exaggeration of the powers of the locomotive steam engine may delude for a time, but must end in the mortification of those concerned. . . . We would as soon expect the people of Woolwich to suffer themselves to be fired off upon one of Congreve's ricochet rockets, as trust themselves to the mercy of such a machine, going at such a rate. We would back old Father Thames against the Woolwich Railway for any sum."

Unfortunately these fears were somewhat justified by the accident that happened at the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in 1830, when a horrified nation saw the hand of avenging justice in the death of Mr Huskisson, the Father of the whole movement, who stepped unwarily before an engine running at the then express speed of thirty-six miles an hour.

Three years later, however, we find England stirred to fury because the Bill to construct the first long line—the

London and Birmingham—was thrown out by the Lords. One writer commented caustically: "There is a blindness which will not see, and how shall it be expected that they should be able to calculate whose schooling has gone little beyond counting the feet of a hexameter verse?"

By the year 1836 there was a "railway mania" in the country, and again in 1845; and although periods of panic followed, in the spirit of "These railways will be the ruin of our constitution, sir," the development was rapid, and did more than perhaps anything else to educate such of the democracy of England who could make use of them, by opening up communication between different parts of the country.

Education—The mention of education reminds us that all the practical steps in that direction, as far as the mass of the people was concerned, were taken in this period.

It is true that in the early years of the century a vast amount of interest was shown in the subject, and that an attempt was made to get the State to recognize its duty in this matter. But the Lords were indignant at the idea that the labouring classes needed anything better than the kindly, if often ignorant, zeal of voluntary workers in night schools and Sunday schools afforded.

As late as 1844 Charles Kingsley bears witness that there was not a grown-up man or woman among the labouring class around Eversley who could read or write, "for as boys and girls they had all been glad to escape early to field work from the parish clerk's little stifling room, ten feet square, where cobbling shoes, teaching and caning went on together."

In 1814 the British and Foreign School Society had been founded by Nonconformists, who took over the school founded by the Quaker Lancaster in Borough Road. Both there and in the Church schools, set on foot by the National Society, most of the teaching was in the hands of "pupil teachers," who taught all day and learnt most of the night. Neither these National Schools nor the "British" Schools obtained a Govern-

ment grant till 1833. Many of these institutions were still of the "Dame School" order, and not for six years did the Government grant carry with it any kind of inspection. Nor was it till 1846 that there was any obligation to provide suitable books or apparatus.

After the year 1850, however, we find a distinct advance. Based on a unanimous resolution by the House of Commons that "the working classes needed more education, moral and religious," a larger grant was given, and the era of "Codes" set in. One of the worst results of these was the origin of the system of "Payment by results," which made the grant depend upon the number of children who could be crammed like prize geese to pass a yearly examination.

The first attempt to provide suitable accommodation for the number of children—the last thing to be considered—was made by Mr Forster in 1870, when School "Boards" were set up to deal with local conditions. In that year he told Parliament that "England was behind every other great country in the world: she was behind most countries that in nowise professed to be great." This Act compelled attendance, but brought to the fore the religious difficulty, for the Voluntary schools taught what doctrine the managers pleased, the Board schools no distinctive doctrine at all.

Forty-two years later these Boards were abolished and their schools were transferred to the Municipal and County Councils.

The effect of compulsory education, including, as it has done in late years, the opportunity of passing from elementary schools to secondary schools and colleges, on social conditions is too far-reaching to be dealt with adequately here. By making rich and poor alike free of the world of ideas, it has done more to level the barriers of class than anything, save perhaps the influence of the Great War, could possibly have done.

The Post Office—The Penny Postage, though its origin is found as early as 1837, was not looked upon with any favour till after 1860, when it began to bring

in profit to the Government. The first proposition made by Rowland Hill was received with ridicule by the Lords, who declared that the Post Office would "burst its walls" if it were asked to carry 480 million letters. Fifty years later three times that amount of letters was actually carried, and twelve times the number sent in 1837. Some sensation was made at the time by the description of how country folk, unable to pay a shilling or more for the letter that brought them news of distant relatives, arranged that empty envelopes should be sent to prove they still existed. The envelopes were, of course, always refused at the door. Rowland Hill himself used to send newspapers, with words underlined to convey prearranged information. Thus a line under the name of a Whig meant the sender was well; if under the name of a Tory, it meant he was dangerously ill. A single sheet sent from Birmingham to London cost ninepence; an enclosure doubled the expense, even if it consisted of a second sheet. No wonder our great-grandmothers got into the way of "crossing" and "recrossing" their letters.

In 1840 the cumbrous arrangement by which each letter had to be weighed, examined, and marked with amount due, and by which the postman had to wait at the door for the postage from the unwilling recipient, was abolished, and the first of the old brick-red stamps was issued on January 1st, 1841. Actually the first stamps were black, with an obliterating mark in red, but this was found to be easily washed off.

The suspicious spirit of the time is seen in the openly expressed fears that servants would destroy letters in order to get stamps, and that all classes would spend their spare time in getting rid of the defacing "post-mark." But the stamp system worked more smoothly than the envelopes themselves, for the public refused to buy those "little bags called envelopes printed with a stamp," and preferred to fold their sheets and stick them with a wafer rather than use such things with their "glutinous wash at the back." Perhaps they were repelled by the allegorical cover of these envelopes, which showed Britannia attended by winged Mercuries and groups of Eastern

merchants, missionaries, Red Indians, elephants, and camels. "On the right stands a dutiful boy reading to his anxious mamma an account of her husband's hapless shipwreck, who, with hands clasped, is blessing Rowland Hill for the cheap rate at which she gets the disastrous intelligence!"

Growth of Imperialism—One of the most important features of this later nineteenth century was the growth of that new feeling towards our colonies that is known by the name of Imperialism. The expansion of the British Empire during this period is far too big a subject to be treated here; and the names of Livingstone, Franklin, Stanley, though their adventures were always of interest to the Motherland, do not, strictly speaking, belong to her social history. But it is interesting to note the complete change of sentiment that had come over Britain since the middle of the century. At that time society in Britain was so "domestic"—in other words, so self-centred and self-interested—that no one knew whether Melbourne was in South Australia or New South Wales or neither, and Britons prided themselves upon speaking of the inhabitants of Canada and the United States alike as Yankees. Even in the early seventies the attitude towards the colonies was one of indifference, and politicians still hinted that the sooner Canada and Australia severed their connection with the home country, the better for all concerned. It needed the explorations of outspoken and popular peers, the journey round the world of the heir to the throne, and even the demands of a colonial war to bring home fully the lesson of the importance of cultivating the spirit of imperialism in place of the nationalism that was the legacy of Tudor times. Nothing could have driven the lesson home in those days as well as the sight upon which all London gazed in the year 1919, when thousands of troops from every part of our Empire, who had given their all to uphold the cause of right in the greatest war in the world, marched through the streets of the capital of the little country which each of those vast lands, while independent

of her rule in almost every respect, was proud to own as "motherland."

And now, with a few notes on various aspects of social life throughout the period, our story of Social England must end.

Inventions and Discoveries—The first public telegraph was established in 1844 between Paddington and Slough. Before that time information was often carried with remarkable speed by the semaphore system, still in use on our ships. Not till 1865 did Britain hear the news that a submarine cable, after many failures, connected the Old World with the New. The first use of electric light for lighthouses was in 1858, when the "High Light" appeared at the North Foreland.

Social Features—The omnibus first appeared in the London streets in 1824. It was drawn by three horses, and carried twenty passengers inside and nine out. For many years the latter clung to a pernicious support known as the "knife-board." "Cabriolets" or cabs, for one passenger only, were invented in 1823, and hansoms in 1836.

At the beginning of the century Westbourne Grove, Notting Hill, Earl's Court were country districts, though the Bayswater Road and Tyburnia were becoming fashionable regions, now that criminals were no longer hanged at the latter.

To that period belongs Regent Street, built to connect Carlton House and Pall Mall with the great stucco house planned by the Regent in Regent's Park. In the latter, about the year 1828, we find the Zoological Gardens opened. Fourteen years earlier had seen the opening of the National Gallery, and Montagu House, which had obtained the library of George III. in 1821, had become the British Museum.

Clubs, such as the Athenæum, were taking the place of the old coffee-houses. "Almack's" was the meeting-place for the most exclusive members of London society; but even in 1842 this exclusiveness was becoming modified. "Steam," writes a contemporary, "has here

dissolved the exclusive system and seems to have substituted the love of wealth for both the love of amusement and of social distinction."

One marked feature of the day in the first half of the century was the *salon*, held by such blue-stockings as Lady Blessington at Gore House, Kensington, and Lady Holland at Holland House. Here gathered the "lions" of the day—literary, political, or scientific—to hear Macaulay talk, or Moore sing his Irish melodies, often at an early hour, before going off to the Royal Institution to hear a lecture from Faraday or Carlyle.

Just after the middle of the century you would have seen these functions attended by ladies fashionably attired in crinolines and large shawls fastened by cameo brooches. Indoors a silk apron was added to the wide skirt, and a long loose jacket. As the skirts ballooned out the hats grew smaller, tiny round affairs with a quill at the side being worn, along with white stockings and low boots. These gave place to the coal-scuttle shape, or the close-fitting bonnet with a long veil, covering hair caught within nets of spangled jet.

Then came the pretty Dolly Varden hat of flapping straw, tied under the chin, worn with pointed bodices of flowered muslin, and polonaise tucked up over coloured petticoats. This gave way to the ugly "bustle," the legacy of the crinoline, which was ousted by the plain tight "Princess" dress of the late seventies. From the "eighties," the era of the first women's colleges, dates the period of dress reform, and the rise of such establishments as "Liberty's," which, hand in hand with the apostles of æstheticism, did much to re-introduce the idea of beauty in dress.

With the increase of wealth among the upper and middle classes came an advance in the standard of comfortable living.

In the early thirties matches began to be generally used in place of the old tinder, flint, and steel. The first matches were sold at the rate of eighty for a shilling, which included a piece of glass paper upon which they were struck.

In 1851 the window tax imposed in the eighteenth century was withdrawn, and fresh air and light were no longer a matter of expense. In all these ways the nation was struggling towards an ideal of freedom expressed in the "nineties" by the commonly heard demand of the young, "I must live my own life."

Never, perhaps, was life more constrained, more artificial, more hedged in than that of both young men and women during the nineteenth century, a fact which accounts in many ways for the remarkable reaction seen in the early years of the present period, with its talk of the "Simple Life," the "Return to Nature," and, above all, the sacred right to individual development.

Exercises

1. Name two features of these years which show the rise of Democracy.
2. Sketch the history of Elementary Education during the century.
3. Describe the development either of the Post Office or the Railway System, and say what you think is their importance in the Social system.

BOOKS TO BE CONSULTED OR READ

The Greville Memoirs.
England since Waterloo. (Marriott.)
The Epoch of Reform. Modern England: History of our own Times. (J. M'Carthy.)
Reign of Queen Victoria. (Ward.)
English People in the Nineteenth Century. (Gibbins.)
Industrial History of England. (Gibbins.)
Fifty Years Ago. (Besant.)

INDEX

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